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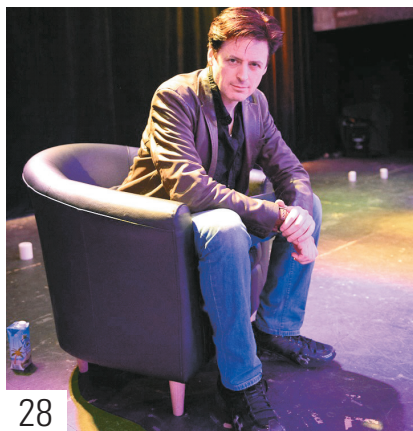
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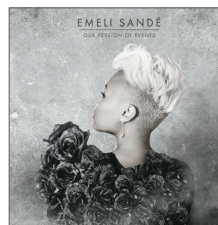
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Delta Chapter of Delta Lambda Phi: Doug Haltinner, President, Göran Gustav and Brendan Follick. Photo by Sophia Hantzes

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ON THE COVER

Dan Savage of "It Gets Better," "Savage Love," and "Savage U" is bringing his Savage Love to you in June. Photo courtesy of Hennepin Theatre Trust



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Volume 17, Issue 444 • May 31–June 13, 2012

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3715 Chicago Avenue S., Minneapolis, MN 55407

LavenderYellowPages.com

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I'M SITTING at my desk in the corner of Lavender's office building, thinking of my first job out of college. I worked for Twin Cities Public Television's now-defunct corporate subsidiary, Point2Point Communication Solutions, in Lowertown St. Paul. Our office was on the top floor of the building that now houses The Bulldog Lowertown; it's exponentially cooler now than then. Back at the turn of Y2K, it only housed a dingy convenience store and an Insty Prints. Overlooking Mears Park and connected to our parent company by skyways, it was a fantastic setting for working; there was plenty to look at, it had access to other business people and lunch destinations, and there was a little hubbub, but not too much.

After the first time I lost my car in the parking ramp at TPT, I vowed to always park in the same place forever and ever, amen. After the boss took me to lunch in the skyway system and then made me find my own way back, I decided to pack my pockets with bread crumbs for any future forays. After a member of the board tossed his keys across my desk telling me to park his car as they slid to a stop, I learned that I was the lowest on the totem pole and some people will always slide their keys to whomever is paid to catch them.

I lived in a combination of earnestness, fear, humility, and righteousness. Being a fresh graduate of Macalester College, I truly believed that I could change the world. It was mine to dissect and deconstruct as a Social Scientist—my degree said so. Though I started my first job asking to use the restroom every time I had to go, I had this odd flipside of confidence that made me feel like I was made of steel. I sat at the front desk, answered the phones, and was the administrative assistant to a handful of creative, hilarious, personable people. It was a job that I didn't know was as fantastic as it was...until after I went to the next ones that weren't so fantastic. At age 22, I sorted the mail and answered the phones. I did the bank deposits. I took graphic design courses. I had three weeks vacation from the get-go...and sick days were on the Honor System. I loved it. I had important work to do, a great place to do it, and I was paid money. Yes, money.

As far as work and employment were concerned, I was particularly engrossed in the topic of Bentham's Panopticon as a spatial model for my work space. As the administrative assistant and receptionist, I was plunked smack dab in the middle of an open office area, surrounded by private offices. I was the center of a wheel; invisible spokes radiated out from me and separated the offices of the company's leaders. If you Google Bentham's Panopticon, you'll find neat images illustrating a prison system that was similar to an Honor System. Envision a wheel—in the center are the prison guards, radiating out from the center are prison cells; the walls between them are the spokes of the wheel. Beyond the cells are windows letting in light and effectively backlighting the inhabitants of each cell for the prison guards to be able to monitor them at whatever time they wanted to. Here's where the Honor System similarity comes in; because of the lighting and positioning of the guards and the prisoners, the prisoners couldn't see the guards and never knew when they

were being monitored. So, they never knew when to behave and, arguably, had to behave all the time in order to be in compliance with their incarceration.

What's my point? When I was 22 years old and working in the center of an office as the lowest on the totem pole, I was convinced that I was in a Reverse Panopticon. It was a reverse model because I was the prisoner in the middle. The people with power were all around me and able to monitor me at any time. Not only did they have legitimate power over me, being my superiors, but they also had visual control over me as I never knew when they were watching or listening. My Nonverbal Communications course reminded me how my desk, being accessible and visible from 360 degrees, left me without privacy. They could overhear my conversations and see what I was working on, so I'd best behave.

I usually did behave. In fact, I was probably the best behaved then...when I was fresh and new and pliable. I realize that I'm comparing it to a prison system, but I think it's because I was finding my way from a rigid school structure and into the freedom of adulthood. I was testing what I thought was freedom against what I thought was constraint when, really, there is good behavior in freedom, too. Freedom does not just mean getting to do whatever we want to the point of misbehaving. Perhaps, unfortunately, we've redefined what it means to misbehave, too. There just aren't tremendous consequences for getting things wrong, not listening, not handing in assignments on time, or treating others discourteously...at least not like there were back in school. Perhaps we do need more of a Panopticon, reverse or not.

These past few months, I've had the pleasure of working with students volunteering from the University of Minnesota and Augsburg College. What I've noticed about them is that they do what they are asked. They are well-behaved. They don't necessarily ask when to use the bathroom, but I'd rather they didn't...so that works out well. They show up. They call when they're late. They are smart and inquisitive and on the top of their games. They still know good grammar and punctuation, not quite having slipped into what some of us might refer to as "business colloquialisms."

Now that I'm no longer the lowest on the totem pole in the middle of an office (my position of power is located in the rear windowless corner of a former Kingdom Hall for Jehovah's Witnesses), I can say that I really like working with these future and current additions to the work force. It's a shame that so many of the new graduates are not finding work—are you kidding me? What they lack in experience, they have in work ethic. They're prepared to get the jobs done. But, what they don't know is that they're not in a Panopticon. I'm not watching their every move—because I know they're behaving. I trust that if I mentor them well enough, they might not backslide into lax adulthood like the rest of us have.

At least when no one's looking.

With thanks,

Andy

School's out for these Lavender graduates! We want to congratulate our Lavender Media team members who recently received their degrees of higher education:



Ethan Boatner
University of Minnesota
School of Continuing
Education

Master of Liberal Studies

photo by Doug Knutson



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Standing On Ceremony

SATURDAY, MAY 5, I was proud to receive my Master of Liberal Studies degree at the U. I was even prouder that several close friends attended and cheered me on. (Audience members, friends, and family were invited to shout out, and the full house at Ted Mann Concert Hall was in excellent voice.)

Mohammed Musani of the Inter-College Program gave an excellent Student Address in which he praised not only the concern and attention of the faculty, but the importance of family and friends to the final success of all the degree candidates gathered that morning.

I thought of my own network of friends, ranging from those I see personally and frequently to those in Amsterdam, California, Boston, Alabama, and Fiji who have listened patiently to my moans and complaints, spurred me to keep going, and cheered at my victory—after all, it's been 49 years since my first degree.

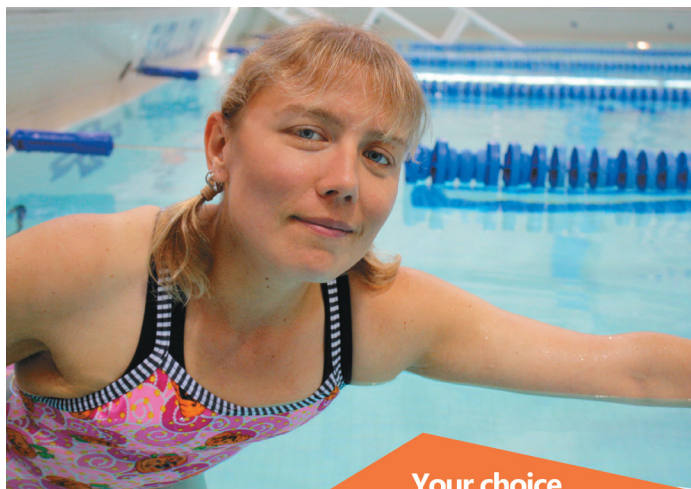
But I also thought of the importance of rites of passage, how they tie one to community or clan, how a person becomes a person through celebrating coming-of-age rituals, and marriages, being for-

mally inducted into the group.

Inclusion is the very thing that so many are working so hard to deny members of our community, our city, our state, our country. My commencement offered a lens through which to focus the importance of ceremony and acceptance, to see how healing continues to be an impossibility as long as individuals for whatever reasons are blocked from full participation in citizenship.

How many of the young—and less than young—graduates left the hall that morning with a fresh diploma but no legal rights to marry and start a life with the person they love? How many may already be partnered to a same-sex spouse and are not privy to the 1,100-some rights held by legally married heterosexual couples?

We're nearly half way through 2012, and, come November, the state ballot will have us vote on whether or not to inscribe discrimination into the state constitution. Gays already cannot legally wed—will we announce our continued bigotry and intention to stand by it? Gay children will be born to Minnesotans. Is a truncated set of civil liberties to be Minnesota's gift to future graduates? □



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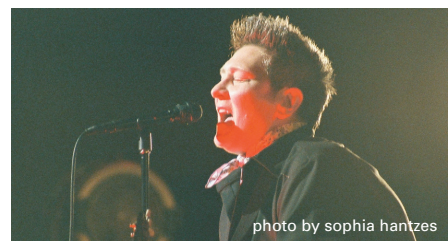
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BINGO A GO GO - MAY 5



K.D. LANG - MAY 12



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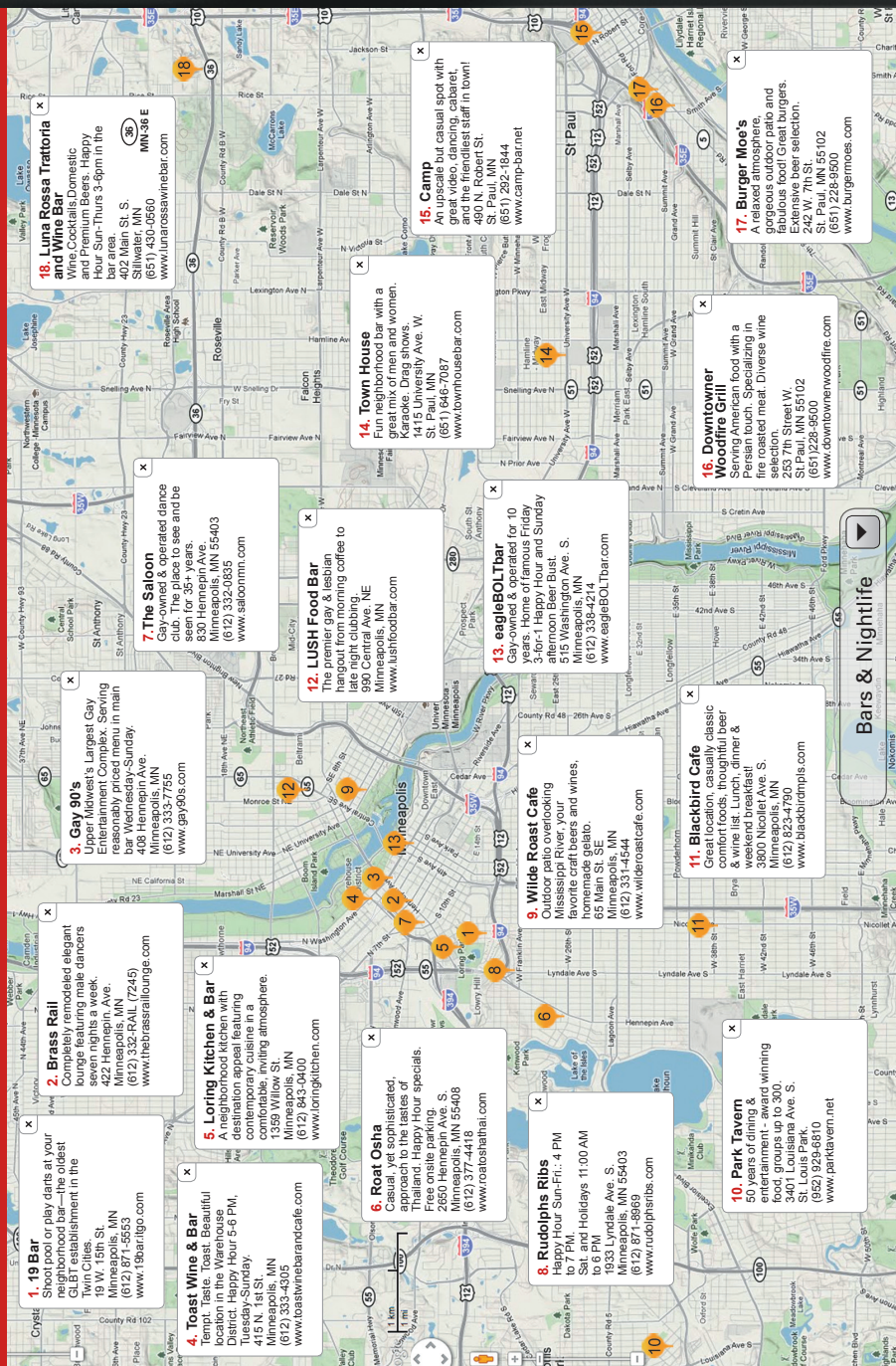
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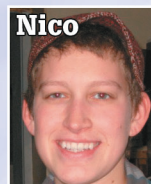
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The Amen Corner. Photo by Michael Brosilow

THE AMEN CORNER

Through June 17

Guthrie Theater, 818 So. 2nd St., Mpls.

(612) 377-2224

www.guthrietheater.org

It's uncanny that the classic play, *The Amen Corner* by James Baldwin (1924-1987), opened at the Guthrie the same week that President Obama announced his support for same sex marriage, which was swiftly followed by angry, even virulent protestations from African American Christians disgusted by what they term as 'the sin of homosexuality.' Though Baldwin's 1954 play does not deal with homosexuality, and it was widely known and still is widely known within the African American community that he was gay, it addresses sexual hypocrisy with complexity, theological depth, and righteous anger in a way that only a brilliant gay writer can. It reinforces the notion of the gay man as a broad interpreter of sexuality in general in the way that playwright Tennessee Williams was and sex columnist Dan Savage is.

Director Lou Bellamy's terrific Penumbra Theatre cast, which plays on the Guthrie's thrust stage, mines the ferocious puritanism that Harlem churchgoers unveil when they find that their minister, Sister Margaret (Greta Oglesby), had left her jazz musician husband, Luke (Hannibal Lokumbe), years before. Remember that it wasn't until the 1960s that the taboo on divorce began to lift. Also, consider how uncommon it was for women to be ministers in the 1950s.

Fatefully, Luke returns to Margaret, wracked with illness, and being the true Christian that she is, she gives him a roof over his head. But this also quickly damages her relationship with their son, David (Eric Berryman), who himself is a paragon in her church, who understandably wants to find out details about why their marriage collapsed, and who wants to get to know his father. Moreover, this means that David's increasing interest in jazz as opposed to church music threatens Margaret's smothering control over him. Luke is now David's gatekeeper for the world at large, not his mother with her idealizing Christianity. For Margaret, as with many African Americans at that time, gospel music is divine. Jazz, sinful. 10 years later, Baldwin would write another major play, *Blues for Mr. Charlie*, which indicts murderous racism from a black v. white viewpoint. But, with *The Amen Corner*, the spotlight is turned unflinchingly on his own race.

This powerhouse production has an epic feel to it. Even Vicki M. Smith's set of an underfunded church facility has a gritty magnificence about it out of which bursts the big emotions and ideas that Baldwin puts forth. Even small roles of congregants played transformationally by Sha Cage and Faye M. Price are exquisitely observed

natural gems in themselves. I've covered Cage and Price for years, and I honestly did not recognize it was them beneath their characters' personae until into the second act.

Lerea Carter amazes in a small role as Ida, a woman facing loss and domestic cruelty, and for whom church platitudes are only salt in her wounds. Thomasina Petrus's Sister Boxer is a chilling evocation of puritanical self-righteousness—perhaps the best performance of her career.

The Tony-caliber Oglesby is marvelous but is hampered by Lokumbe's lack of acting chops. He is a world renowned musician, and looks the part, but he doesn't emotionally connect with her. Also, Lokumbe's big scene with David midway through the play drags.

Berryman is superb and captures the very essence of youth just about to expand into the larger world. He brings to mind Tom, suffocated by parochial home life, in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*. The only white character in the show is a non-speaking role by Benjamin Mandelbaum, whose well-scrubbed look matches Berryman's nicely. They seem to exude a slight sense of gay puppy love. Baldwin would have been pleased, dare I say.

Sanford Moore's musical direction of gospel sung by Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church is, on the one hand, splendid. But on the other hand, overly festive musical selections intrude far too much into the bleaker, more existential moments of the play, undermining Baldwin's intent. More somber selections or none at all in such moments would have been appropriate. In sum, despite some flaws, this is a big, beautiful production that merits a transfer to Broadway. The Tony Awards would surely nominate, if not award it, for Best Revival.

Two years after this play,

Baldwin wrote the short novel, *Giovanni's Room*, a landmark in gay and African American literature. See this play and get that book!

STANDING ON CEREMONY: THE GAY MARRIAGE PLAYS

Through June 16

New Century Theatre, City Center, 615 Hennepin Av., Mpls.

(800) 982-2787

www.hennepintheatretrust.org

Don't miss some of the Twin Cities' finest actors in this ultra-professional staged reading of 10 short works by playwrights of note. As the gay marriage controversy rages statewide and nationwide, this is the sort of theater art that will anchor and deepen your arguments for gay marriage and tickle your funny bone.

The bulk of what's offered is madcap comedy. Highlights include Wendy McLeod's *The Flight Tonight* which centers on a California lesbian couple about to board a plane to get married in Iowa. Paul Rudnick's *The Gay Agenda* hilariously reveals through Freudian slips a conservative woman's subconscious discomfort with her two gay neighbors. Doug Wright's *On Facebook* is drawn from actual online arguments about gay marriage.

Other plays include ideas around marriage vows and how physical attraction can affect pairing up. The most moving work is Moises Kaufman's *London Moquitoes* which muses on a couple who first bonded when JFK was assassinated and then had a primary relationship that outlasted many, if not most of, the heterosexual relationships, of their generation.

Tectonic Theater Project, which created the Matthew Shepard play, *The Laramie Project*, and of which Kaufman is Artistic Director, assembled these marriage plays last year for an international simulcast reading. Our local production was directed by Wendy ➡

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Knox who has also directed this incarnation. This year's actors: Shawn Hamilton, Mark Rhein, Jim Lichtscheidl, Laura Adams, Aimee K. Bryant, and Shanan Custer.

BLUE MAN GROUP

June 15-24
Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Av., Mpls
(800) 982-2787
www.hennepintheatretrust.org

Those three bald blue characters who have taken the world by storm are on tour with their multimedia smash. Consumerism, computerized gadget obsessions, and gumballs are given a kinetic commentary by these agile performers and a dazzling production concept. No dialogue, but an array of tribal rhythms make for a sense-driven experience that will make you see the world differently than when you walked in.

Trio member Kalen Allmandinger points out "this show is more character-driven. The Blue Man navigates his way through the evening, interacting with audience and technology in search of what it means to connect, and of how best to do so. Along the way he finds himself in the middle of a varied landscape, full of both wild extravagance and quiet simplicity."

THE BOYS IN THE BAND

June 7 - 23
Lowry Lab, 350 St. Peter St., St. Paul
(646) 248-3968
www.brazentheatre.org

In 1968, Mart Crowley's Off-Broadway comedy was such a hot ticket that major figures in show biz and politics flocked to Theater Four where it ran for over 1,000 performances. Film star Natalie Wood, who starred in the landmark hetero sex comedy *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* the following year, was one of its financial backers, and when you put *The Boys in the Band* in context with plays and films about gay men created up to this point, it's nothing short of earth-shattering. However, many people who are gay and progressive wrongly assert that

the play is dated, negative, and (though they may not use the term) 'politically incorrect.' This is nonsense because Crowley's vision of a flamboyantly gay birthday party 'intruded' on by a man who may be latently homosexual is one of the most penetrating examinations of internalized self-loathing in theater history. Timeless.

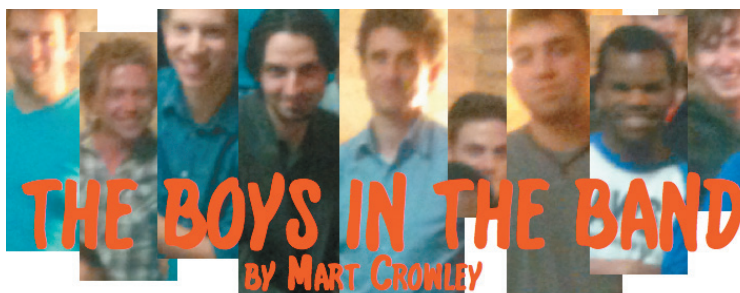
As Mark Hooker, director of Brazen Theatre's revival, reminds us, it "still echoes themes present with the community today: dealing with unfair treatment in society, and also how we can sometimes be cruel to ourselves within the LGBT community. *The Boys in the Band* is funny and frightening in the same way that Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is frightening. And in the end, it reflects our past and present while pointing to hope in the future."

FELA!

June 12-17
Ordway Center, 345 Washington St., St. Paul
(651) 224-4222
www.ordway.org

Fela Anikulapo Kuti (1938-1997) looms as one of modern history's prime exemplars of how art can actually catalyze shifts of political consciousness. His resistance to Nigerian dictatorships spirited forth Afrobeat, a musical genre that blends jazz, funk, and African rhythms. Olivier and Tony-nominee Sahr Ngaujah stars in the bio-musical *FELA!*, now on its national tour, which plays at the Ordway. Iconic gay rights pioneer and choreographer, Bill T. Jones, nabbed one of the show's three Tony wins.

Paulette Ivory, who played Nala in the London production of *The Lion King*, co-stars as Sandra Izsadore, the Black Panther activist who profoundly influenced Kuti's sensibility. Ivory describes how when "I started listening to the lyrics, I thought, wait a minute, this man is actually singing out a political message in the middle of the song that I didn't expect to hear. People would be having



The Boys in the Band. Photo courtesy of Brazen Theatre

a good time, but then they would stop and listen and go yeah, this is not right what the government is doing. Yeah, we are led by a military regime that is suppressing us and not helping us, that is making themselves richer while we are getting poorer. We are suffering immensely, and Nigeria is falling apart. What can we do about it? [Kuti's music] is what we can do about it."

This awareness spurred by the lyrics is where the consciousness shift then kicks in. As Ivory points out, the next step was for people to consider "how we would let the world know that Nigeria is being controlled in this way. So that's what's revolutionary about it—the way he got his message out there. What a brilliant approach to go; music is the weapon. Music which is for everybody, old, young, black, white. Music will touch everybody and then we get our message out there." Kuti died of complications related to AIDS in 1997.

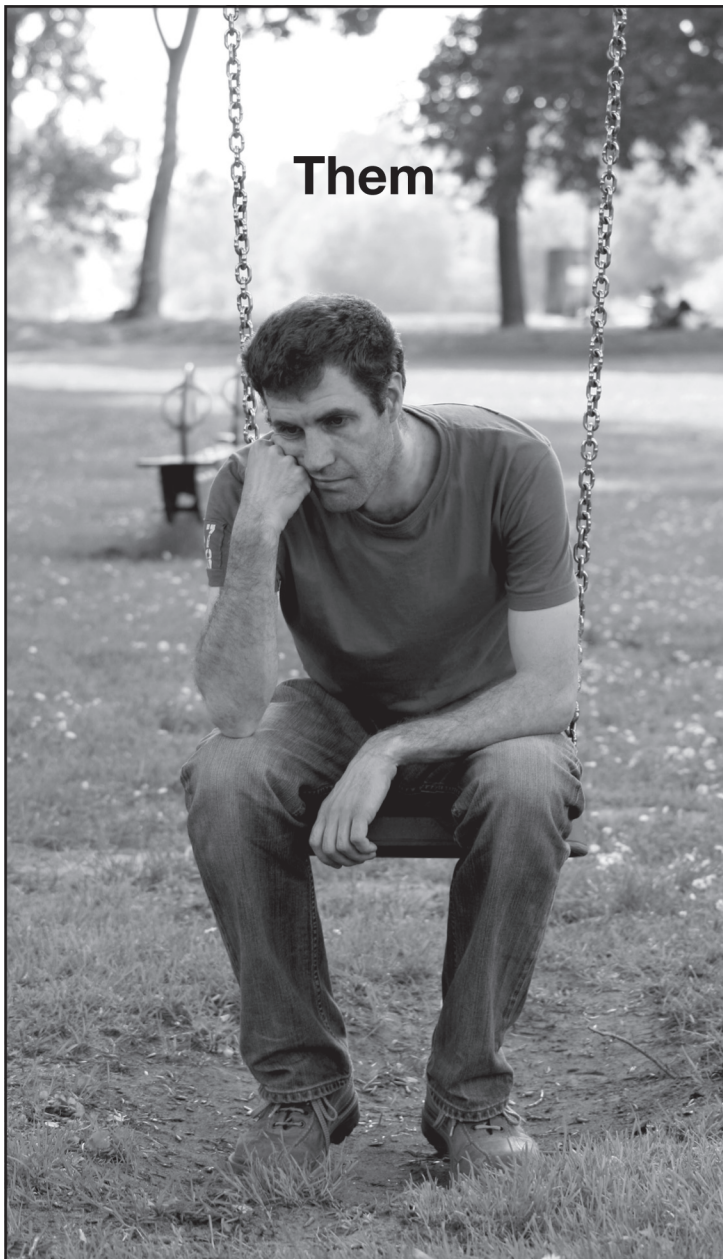
THE NAKED I: WIDE OPEN REMOUNT FOR PRIDE SEASON

June 13-16
Intermedia Arts, 2822 Lyndale Av. S., Mpls.
(612) 227-1188
www.tctwentypercent.org

When I saw this eclectic assemblage of short trans-oriented vignettes and dramas last February, I was struck with its angry mixed messages about the down side of labeling and then, on the other side, the idea that we should all be up to the minute with whatever new terminology GLBT academics and powers elite should be putting forth. And you must be phobic if you don't get it! Such mixed messages still haunt the GLBT world and are serious flaws that we are not supposed to acknowledge. It's straight society that's our bogey man, right? Certainly not ourselves. Worst of all, this mixed messaging keeps potential allies walking on eggshells because they fear they may have used the wrong term or pronouns, hence some gay guy or transgender person will ridicule them for simply trying to understand. We get too caught up in our egocentric games of 'gotcha' with people who are genuinely interested and curious about our realms at the expense of friendship. This is a game where we emulate the sorry manipulations of other equality movements.

That said, there were two exceptional pieces that merit being shaped into longer plays. *The Story of Bob* was as in-your-face as any of the others, but it excelled because playwright Ben Resman reveals the grim details of a botched gender re-assignment surgery. Per the 'Naked' in the evening's title, Resman says "there is no question that the topic of Surgeries Gone Awry makes people uncomfortable. However, this is a show about being 'Naked.' For me, being Naked meant telling my own story—a story about what happened to me in a failed surgery." Abel Knochel gives a strong lead performance directed by Megan Lembke.

At the opposite emotional extreme is the lovely little play, *Pink and Blue: A (short) Love Story*. Katie Starks has directed two sweet performances by Erica Fields and Zealot Hamm. Playwright Andrea Jenkins calls it "a vignette about a transgender woman who is enamored with a cis-gender, straight woman. Though at the time, the transgender woman had no idea of her love interest's sexual identity. It recognizes that societal influences and bias might deter the average cis-gendered person from taking a chance on love with a transgender person. It is ultimately a universal story of love relationships, because they all have challenges that complicate matters which is why the refrain of 'She loves me, She loves me not' is prevalent throughout the piece." (Cis-gender refers to the alignment of gender identity with the physical body you inhabit.) □



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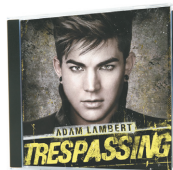
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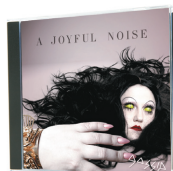
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**ADAM LAMBERT** *Trespassing*

After the odd “I’m gay only when it’s convenient” vibe of his first post-“American Idol” efforts, Adam Lambert has engaged with his inner sparkle on his sophomore release for stronger, if still limited, success. He has gone from sounding like any other “Idol” clone, albeit with strong pipes, into a fair approximation of Justin Timberlake, which certainly isn’t all bad. The early, dance-fueled tunes recall the more straightforward pop of the early 2000s, while a string of MOR ballads don’t do much to excite. The title “Outlaws of Love” promises a bad-ass Judas Priest song, but turns out to be a rather tame, if at least pride-centric, power ballad. Lambert needs more seasoning to follow up on his potential.

**GOSSIP** *A Joyful Noise*

Times have changed through the past decade-plus for Gossip (formerly appended with “the”), who has gone from a K-Records indie-rock outfit to a full-out synth-pop outfit with nary a guitar to be heard. Others have followed the path before, and there certainly is a sly intelligence in songs like “Get a Job” that are far from the mindless lyrics that dominate the pop charts. Singer Beth Ditto certainly possesses a more soulful voice than a lot of her indie-rock kin, and it fits in well here. The best songs are slower burns, building up atmosphere before getting to disco-tinged moments perfect for packing a goth-inspired dance floor. Tunes like “Casualties Of War” and “Involved” showcase the band at its moody best.

**LADYHAWKE** *Anxiety*

Londoner-by-way-of-New-Zealand Pip Brown unleashes her alter-ego’s second album onto a pop landscape that has changed quite a bit in the four years since her debut. Ladyhawke doesn’t care, as she is an artist willing to dance to her own electronic drumbeat. There’s plenty of pleasurable beats and driving tunes here, from the opening one-two punch of “Girl Like Me” and “Sunday Drive” through the rest of this pulsating album. Producer Pascal Gabriel brings his three decades of music-making experience to the fore here, collaborating with Brown to create the best Ladyhawke so far. A tune like “Vanity,” with a Brit-pop-like bounce straight out of an early Blur album, shows that there are plenty of positive places for pop music to go.

**NORAH JONES** *Little Broken Hearts*

As the title indicates, this is a break-up album, but Jones has more in play than airing dirty laundry. Built over several years with producer Danger Mouse, *Little Broken Hearts* features a striking string of musical departures for the silky-voiced singer, who lets the rawness of her emotions seep into this experimental release. How experimental? While Jones’ voice is always recognizable, the musical tapestry digs deeper into indie rock, such as on the behind-the-mix fuzzed out guitars on “Take it Back.” In fact, when Jones slips closer to familiar territory on the back half of the album, the collection noticeably loses focus, as if the songs needed that extra touch to take them to the next level. Album closer “All A Dream” does bring that vibe back. □

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Why Sex Columnist Dan Savage Should Be Required Reading For All Students At All Educational Institutions And Students of Life in General

DAN SAVAGE, America's most popular sex columnist, is an openly gay man who is as enlightened about queer sexuality as he is about heterosexuality. He will go down in history as a seminal figure who bridged the two realms. His MTV series, "Savage U," has him traveling to various institutions of higher learning and fielding frank, uninhibited questions from students.

Educationally speaking, true learning and inquiry can only come from releasing prejudices as much as possible. Unfortunately, discussions about sexuality are too often wracked with prejudices formed by misinformation and disinformation sprung from personal and institutional shame. But Savage puts the shame aside and lets his readers and questioners let it all hang out.

He has pointed out that there's a lot of open discussion about sexuality in print and online. Savage, himself, has become an online hero with www.itgetsbetter.org, which provides healing energy to kids targeted by bullies and anyone else who may be dealing with ramifications of bullying.

However, television is not as advanced in its straight talk about sexuality as are well selected internet sites and certain books and publications. With the exception of the rare cable show, television tends to approach sexual issues on moralistic grounds, even on networks we are told are liberal. Programming generally does not examine what actual sexual experiences are like, and it's the rare tv program that delves into nuanced, complex, layered notions of the nature of sexuality.

Moreover, sex ed in many places has had its budget cut and restrictions put on what's mentionable. Regrettably, many younger college students, especially from isolated areas, may only have seen entertainment that capitalizes on objectified images of sexy young men and women and heard judgemental insinuations and protestations from prissy media figures who address sex in prudish fashions. Though CNN's Anderson Cooper has been sympathetic toward bullying victims and same sex marriage, he recently badgered www.backpage.com attorney Liz MacDougall who was trying quite reasonably to counter his questionable accusations of her company supporting child sex trafficking. Indeed she handled his

onslaught well, but Cooper's shrillness—the opposite of inquiry—actually took us further away from possibly gleaning enough information to start solving the problem! Fox's Bill O'Reilly constantly expresses animosity toward gays and women's rights and their supposed attack on family values, but his nickname is 'Captain Phone Sex,' which came about from his communications with an extramarital 'friend with benefits.' Savage himself has fingered CNN's Nancy Grace, clearly an exponent of the outmoded sex-negative feminism of the '80s, for getting on her righteous high horse in an interview with a male porn star. Grace, in her typically unctious way, ended up reinforcing stereotypes about feminists and white women with southern accents. Happily, however, one "Savage U" episode was held at Alabama's Auburn University where the host was warmly embraced by well-scrubbed southern youth who clearly appreciated his insights. And the young women he interviewed were obviously more clear in their thinking than Grace.

To be clear, Savage is totally 100% about consensual safer adult sex. And it's that adult realm that he navigates so helpfully. He gives a sense of the difference between being legitimately careful or dubious and being racked with fear. This means that he has demystified kinks that once upon a time were considered 'weird' or 'perverted' or 'sick.' He's quite firm on how we misuse such terms and in so doing often thwart potentially wonderful experiences and relationships.

His letter writers open up with questions about their interests in various kinds of role play, in fetishes that will amaze you, in how one goes about having a successful group sex scene with their spouse or life partner. Not only does he not judge these things, he has us consider that the exploration of such things can be a path to deeper self-awareness. Moreover, he is invaluable to couples, straight and gay, who want to work out ways of having their sexual needs and desires met.

Though Savage is certainly not anti-porn he observes that porn peering, like video games, can become a compulsive vicarious behavior that takes one away from dealing with one's sexuality and other issues. He's comparable to the wonderful Cindy Gallop of www.makelovenotporn.com who is not anti-porn

but wary of how too much porn can debilitate intimacy and actual erotic expression. Hence, marriages and relationships could be saved.

Ironically, conservatives who squawk about the need to keep marriage traditional fail to see that what will keep marriages intact is a clear path of communication between spouses. Savage guides you along such a path. And if it includes spicing up your marriage with an added partner, he provides an ethical structure to help facilitate that.

And this is perhaps what Savage's detractors bristle at the most: the world of sexual exploration is not sinful, but it is however not an ethics-free zone. Sexually active people and those who want to become more sexually active may not use the underground nature of most sexual exploration as a place to secretly violate others. If you go to a swinger party, you may not go grab the buttocks of any unaccompanied woman there who strikes your fancy. If you tell your husband you want a three-way with another woman as long as he penetrates her, but goes ahead and does, that is a violation. If you make a date for a tryst, and you don't bother to show up without calling, that's shabby. If you are a woman who goes ballistic because your husband wants to dress in panties or watch you urinate, you're wrong to shame him for it. If you are a straight man who likes athletic men to kick you in the groin and you know you are not homosexual, it is wrong for gay men to then judgementally obsess with the idea that 'you must be gay'. If you are a gay man or a lesbian who wants to be dominated by a straight man or woman who calls you names, you are not a traitor to the GLBT movement.


Sex shamers and so-called 'slut shamers' like to think that their abstinence or pretense at abstinence is a form of ethics. Or that their radical professed willingness to exclude kinks, fantasies, and raunch is virtuous. However, there's nothing ethical or virtuous about them.

Savage illuminates just why that is and in so doing, revolutionizes how we handle sexuality. □

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JOHN FUGELSANG: Our Favorite 'Stagfag' Talks About His New Comedy Show and Recent Strides in Gay and Lesbian Rights

JOHN FUGELSANG is surely one of the most passionate and eloquent straight allies of GLBT Americans. He is also one of the most intelligent and funny comedians around. Whether he's co-hosting on Stephanie Miller's radio show or hosting the Va Va Voom Awards for Visual AIDS, a noted group that supports artists with HIV and the legacy of HIV art, he fractures with a vengeance the stereotypes about straight guys being insensitive to queer issues.

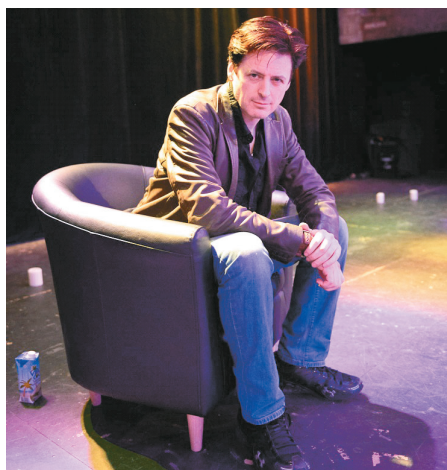
Though Fugelsang has lately been best known for his dynamic comic turns in the national tour of *The Sexy Liberal Show*, for which Lavender Spotlight named him Best Solo Performer From Out of Town 2011, he has actually developed a more ambitious solo show, *Guilt: A Love Story* directed by Tony-nominee, Pam MacKinnon, which plays the Pantages on June 16.

Fugelsang, the son of an ex-nun and an ex-Franciscan monk, draws from his own personal history to expound on religious intolerance and the absurdities of right wing politics. But he's not merely a stand up comic. His performances have a physical and vocal power that spellbinds, so it's no surprise *Guilt: A Love Story* was nominated by the Drama League for Best Off-Broadway solo show.

JT: You won me over the first time I heard you call yourself a 'stagfag' on Stephanie Miller's radio show. How did you come up with that?

JF: Faghag – when I was a kid, that was what they called a woman who hung out with gay men, and I'm a straight guy who hangs out with gay men. I lived in Greenwich Village. I grew up in regional theater. When I was 13, I realized I was a homophobic bigot and that half the men I knew and loved were gay. And that I was just conforming and that I really hadn't thought about things. So my heart was opened at a very early age. Like I said, I lived in Greenwich Village; my best friends were gay. I'd hang out at gay bars – that's where all the cool women are.

The LGBT culture is such a part of my life. I got to live in Greenwich Village at the



John Fugelsang. Photo courtesy of John Fugelsang

dawn of ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and the AIDS resistance movement. I moved there in the late '80s when I was 16 years old, so I got to witness the birth of ACT-UP and that whole generation. I had a lot of friends with HIV who died and some who lived, and my best friend from childhood was a hemophiliac who contracted HIV. He was a homophobe, and he died. For me, in a way, it affected me. When the President made his announcement about marriage equality, a lot of progressives want to pooh-pooh it and say "Welcome to the party now. Where were you a few years ago?" But I understand the compromises he has to make for political reasons. But I felt there's never been any minority group in history that has made as much progress in as short a time as LGBT Americans. Throughout all of human civilization, we've never seen a minority group go from underground and being rather despised and trivialized, (in a) marginalized status to a place of social prominence and acceptance. And really it's because of the plague. AIDS is what caused the LGBT community to mobilize and get their shit together, to not wait to ask for rights to be given, but to take them. I think there's a direct correlation between the AIDS plague and Barack Obama's announce-

ment because, were it not for that horrible, horrible disease, we would not have seen all the beautiful advances we've seen over the past few years. And it makes me proud to be an American and proud to be a human.

JT: We should count our blessings as we recall how far we've come in memory of those who have passed away.

JF: A lot of young guys don't realize this. I know gay teens who don't even like to use the word 'gay.' They don't want to have any kind of label. I respect that. Each generation has to carve out its own identity. I have to look for positives everywhere I can. We would never have seen gay and lesbian troops allowed to serve openly in the military. We would never have seen marriage equality legalized in so many states were it not for this disease.

JT: You have a rich sense of history that comes through your interviews obviously, and through your comedy. Not to mention your political and religious insights. Tell me about *Guilt: A Love Story*.

JF: It's about guilt and about love. I begin it with the story of Onan in the book of Genesis and how that story was used to demonize birth control, same-sex relationships, masturbation, and any kind of non-procreative sexuality. And how so much of what religion punishes us for, we punish ourselves for. It doesn't come from God. It doesn't come from you. It comes from the hang ups of dead guys.

It also begins with the story of my parents' love story. How they once swore never to love and then broke their vows and how neurotic it can make you to be the child of parents who once promised God you'd never exist. I use [all this] as a springboard for a lot of funny stories and a lot of funny history of how religion got to be as crazy as it is. The whole show is about breaking vows and the growth that can come from that. ■

Guilt: A Love Story

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The Left Handed Cook

It takes a special kind of crazy to want to pick up from L.A., where you've been established a career and life for yourself, plop down in the middle of a city that you've never lived in, and open up a business. Thankfully, Thomas Kim and Kat Melgaard are just the right kind of crazy. Tiring of the smog, the traffic, and the general high cost of living, they traded in the City of Angels for the Minneapple.

Kim has extensive experience, having worked in the highly starred kitchens of Nobu and Roy Yamaguchi. Before his time in L.A., he was working in food snob paradise of San Francisco. While his experience was mostly as a sushi chef, he had dreams of opening his own place.

Before Melgaard went westward, she was raised on a farm in North Dakota. Growing up a sneeze away from Canada, she is better prepared for the winters that are yet to come. She spent some time in Minneapolis years ago when she attended the Aveda Institute.

When it came time for them to decide where to land, she remembered her time in the Cities fondly and knew she would at least be closer to her family (though they'll likely miss the perks of visiting L.A. in the winter).

They considered other locations, but they have decided to open their new restaurant inside a stall at the Midtown Global market. They were able to transform what was once La Sirena Gorda into a hip space that will sell food to grab and go as well as have counter service.

The concept of The Left Handed Cook is revolutionary for the Midtown Global Market place. The menu sounds like a long list of the food that I know chefs love to eat in their off hours. It's all at once gourmet, but full of comfort food. It's full of Asian accents, but entirely at home in the Midwest.

The pulled pork sandwich is full of tender barbecued tendrils, mixed with bacon beneath a slaw spiked with a sweet Korean chili sauce and tucked inside a buttery domed Salty Tart bun.

The soft shell crab sandwich is full of generous hunks of crispy fried crab, a Korean aioli, and a generous splash of lemon juice. It's hearty, bright, savory, and luscious.

However, the one menu that simply cannot be missed is the fried chicken. Chicken breasts are breaded tempura-style using rice flour

The
Left
Handed
Cook



Thomas Kim & Kat Melgaard, owners of new "Minne Kitchen," The Left Handed Cook. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

and potato starch and hit with 21 spices. I asked Kim, "Why 21? Is it even possible to taste so many different spices?"

"Well, there are like five chili powders in there—there's no way to be able to taste them all." He went on to explain that, while he uses a very Japanese technique, the flavors are mainly American. He loves the aromatic quality of coriander, sage, rosemary, and thyme. The result is a flavor riot inside your mouth. Kapow! The crunchy ➔

Continued on page 32

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**The
Left
Handed
Cook**



1-Asparagus with baby arugula salad and a poached egg; 2-Pulled pork sandwich with spicy slaw; 3-21 spiced fried chicken;

crust gives way to ultra juicy chicken on the inside. Sometimes, life lets us be present in those special moments when we find a new and last love. I know that, from here on out, this is the chicken that I will crave.

The most unique feature at The Left Handed Cook will be their chef's table. Beginning at 4:30, the counter space they have will be transformed (well, they'll pull back a curtain, but I'm sure it will be dramatic). A prix fixe menu will be revealed, and for a nominal amount of money (in the \$35 range), guests will be able to watch this chef really flex his muscles. To say nothing of his L.A. expertise, he's been warming up inside Piccolo's kitchen since he moved here, doing a couple of stages. His creative juices are piqued, and he's ready to show them off. I predict this will be one of the most unique cheap date night



4-Soft shell crab sandwich. Photos by Hubert Bonnet



NEWSY BITS

Icehouse finally has an opening date. Described as a restaurant with a stage, the food will be done by the same guys who run Be'Wicked, and the stage will feature some major local music players. Open June 7th.

The **Butcher & the Boar** garden is open, and I was right: it's the new best patio in downtown Minneapolis. Unfortunately, the menu is quite limited. The beer and bourbon is a plentiful, though.

It's good to be Tim McKee. This week **Masu Sushi & Robata** was featured in both *Food & Wine* and *Bon Appetit*. Then *Men's Fitness* crowned his original restaurant, **La Belle Vie** one of the Top 25 Bars in America. Johnny Michaels wrote the bar menus at both spots.

Sad news for breakfast al fresco diners: **Mill City Café** is closing. Their final service will be a party May 30th from 5 to 10pm. Owner Mandy Zechmeister assured me that they will soon relocate and that she'll keep us posted on the new locale.

experiences the city has to offer.

While he mans the food, Melgaard manages the service aspect. Her creative eye and punk-DIY aesthetic brings a unique look to The Left Handed Cook. She adds genius little touches like Mason jars filled with vegetable oil and pictures placed inside. They made for great centerpieces at their opening party. Plastic cups were adorned with beads that spelled out helpful suggestions like, "Eat more." She's a party-throwing genius.

They also hope to soon be able to offer beer and wine. Once El Burrito Mercado opens nearby, the hope is that they, alongside Sonora Grill, will be able to band together and open a little beer garden.

Midtown Global Market continues to be a terrific place for hugely talented food makers to get their foot in the door. Or in this case, one talented left hand. □

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Your Humble Blogger

HERE'S AN announcement I am thrilled to make: Every previous installment of this Leather Life column—the complete works, the entire corpus, the whole enchilada—is now available on the Web in blog form.

Yes, your humble columnist has also, at long last, become Your Humble Blogger. Every Leather Life column published in *Lavender* Magazine since 1995 (when both the magazine and the column started) is now available at leathercolumn.blogspot.com. At this writing that's over 430 blog posts, so there's plenty of material to explore.

The new blog supersedes a former Leather Life website, www.leatherlife.net, that was started in 2005 but went mostly undeveloped. The former website's address now redirects to the new blog, at least for the time being.

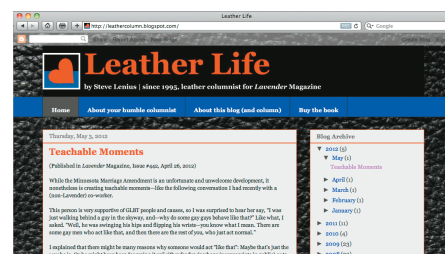
Articles are presented as originally published in *Lavender*—more or less. Most of the addresses and telephone numbers, especially in the event listings of the early

columns, have been deleted. Some email addresses and website URLs have been left intact, mostly as a matter of historical interest.

All of the text of previous columns is now contained in the blog. Photos that were originally published with the columns will be added in the weeks ahead. Future columns will be added to the blog after first appearing in the print and various online editions of *Lavender*.

Commenting is enabled for each blog post, so feel free to comment. (I'm sure I hardly need to ask everyone to keep their comments civil and to not post spam.)

Because the columns were originally published in *Lavender*, and *Lavender* is considered a family magazine, the blog is not restricted to readers over the age of 18. If you're looking for porn, therefore, you will need to look elsewhere. On the other hand, if you're looking for information and entertaining reading about the life, history



and culture of the gay, lesbian, and pansexual leather/BDSM/fetish community, I hope you will be happy with what you find at leathercolumn.blogspot.com.

Finally, the inevitable shameless self-promotion: Your humble columnist's first book, *Life, Leather and the Pursuit of Happiness*, contains some of these columns in expanded form, with updates, cross-references and even footnotes. So if you like what you read in the blog, you will certainly want to own the book. □

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OUT ON CAMPUS

by Kathleen Watson

Ah, college—the “best years of your life.” Whether you’re looking to start school, are currently a college student, or can fondly reminisce about college times gone by, one important aspect of college is finding your identity and sharing it with others. Depending on the school, being out on campus can be liberating, exciting, or downright scary. But one thing is certain: being out and proud allows people to form a sense of community, provide support for others, and work to improve the experiences of GLBT people on campus. The following staff, faculty, students, and graduates came out and spoke out about their experiences on campus and everything they’ve done to make college campuses a more welcoming environment.

GLBT
support
welcoming
exciting
community

MATTHEW ANTONIO BOSCH

UNIVERSITY OF
MINNESOTA,
TWIN CITIES

As the new Director of GLBT Ally Programs office, Matthew Antonio Bosch’s main goal is to train people at the U, host events, and get other University offices to participate in institutional change work that improves the experiences of GLBT students. He notes that the “biggest one is that now we have trans-inclusive student health benefits. On the University of Minnesota’s student benefit plan, there are now provisions that remove the exclusion of transgender individuals. Previously, the plan was not as open as it could be for people of all gender. Now there are different services available. This is huge for us.”

Bosch can’t stress enough how welcoming the U of M is for GLBT folks. He says, “I’m really unapologetic about being out.” Not only can people comfortably be out on campus, but there are countless resources available for every GLBT-related issue under the sun. There are 40-plus GLBT groups or initiatives at the U of M, and the resources are not limited to University students. “We will get calls from all over, people who want to know about resources.”

In Bosch’s opinion, students should get connected quickly to GLBT support groups and become acclimated with the services provided at a college. “You don’t always necessarily have to come out because sometimes that’s risky. Be aware of your surroundings. But get connected to folks so when something does happen...you have someone to talk to. If you’re in an environment that makes you feel uncomfortable, make sure you have numbers to call and people you can contact.”

Bosch also encourages people to ask future employers lots of questions, particularly about domestic partnership benefits, the GLBT environment, and any harassment policies they have. He also urges people to “Be unapologetic about who you are. Just go. Be yourself. There’s nothing else you can do. I want students to not second-guess themselves and not second-guess their identities.” □

Photo by Sophia Hantzes



identity
sharing
out
liberating
scary
support

TAYLOR FOSTER

**SOCIOLOGY MAJOR/
CRIMINAL JUSTICE MINOR
AUGSBURG COLLEGE**

As one of Augsburg College's first out trans students, Taylor Foster knew he couldn't keep silent about who he was. Coming out as trans while at Augsburg, Foster used his experience to help promote a safe and inclusive environment on campus. "I think it's very safe being out at Augsburg," Foster notes that people, both students and faculty, were very aware of learning to using proper pronouns.

Foster has been one of the most influential queer students on campus. As the co-president of QSU, Foster was able to raise awareness of trans issues on campus—issues that had never received much attention. He organized Augsburg's first Trans Day of Remembrance, bringing in speakers to talk about trans issues and getting permission to change most campus bathrooms to gender-inclusive bathrooms. "We had specific bathrooms that were still gendered in order to respect everyone and not try to force anything on anyone. One of the places trans people face the most discrimination revolves around bathrooms. On campus, we have only eight gender-neutral bathrooms, and I wanted to show others how inconvenient it was to try to go and find one of them."

Most notable, however, was Foster's leadership after a shocking incident where a gay student was assaulted near campus. He started a movement (which he "didn't mean to start on purpose, it kind of just happened") called Stand Up Against Hate where he encouraged the Augsburg community to speak out against the incident and not condone violence against GLBT people. "I asked what I thought was going to be just a group of our friends and a few others to wear the colors of the rainbow during the week, and the group expanded up to over 650 people including alumni and family... It kind of blew up, and what I liked most about it was that Augsburg didn't quiet it. They were just like 'Alright, what do we do now? Let's talk about it. Let's work together to create a safer space.'"

Foster also helped organize GLBT-friendly housing on campus, which is now called "Everybody Loves Everybody," in order to create an accepting community in the residence hall. Students living on the GLBT-friendly floors find an immediate sense of support and family. "It's just a safe space for people to live in community. We all hang out. Someone is always blaring Lady Gaga. We are a family. For a lot of us, this was our family."

Foster hopes to spread the word about trans issues and bullying of GLBT youth. He hopes to become an openly trans and queer school resource officer, a police officer within a school. "I want to promote acceptance and love to all, and I want to work in the Anoka-Ramsey school district where a lot of the bullying is going on."

Simply put, Foster was able to grow into his identity at school, and he encourages others to do the same. "College is where you find yourself. Well, do that. It's not going to be easy. We all want to hope that there's this one day where it will all be unicorns and rainbows, but right now, it's just not. We need to know that it's going to be a fight, but it's a fight worth having." □

Photo by Hubert Bonnet

identity
sharing
out
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support



TRUNG NGUYEN

**STUDIO ART MAJOR/ART
HISTORY MINOR
HAMLINE UNIVERSITY**

Taking advantage of the positive and comfortable environment of Hamline University, Trung Nguyen spent his four years at Hamline being involved in many organizations that support GLBT students and ethnic students. As a member of Spectrum (Hamline's LGBTQ student group), the Safe Zone Advisory Committee, Asian-Pacific American Coalition, and many other organizations, Nguyen's positive influence has been felt by a large group of students on campus.

As a first-generation college student, and "first-and-a-half" generation immigrant, graduating from college is a very big deal in Nguyen's family. "There was so much pressure...this is the culmination of a lot of years of sacrifice, and I really have to do this."

But what was even more of a big deal was coming out to his family, who are political refugees from Vietnam who escaped religious persecution for being Catholic. "They have a good sense of what is a real problem because they've been through a lot of really terrible things." Although Nguyen's family is now supportive, he still recalls the difficulty in coming out to a traditional family. "It was sort of complicated because there was no word for homosexual in Vietnamese, so I had the complicated and somewhat mixed blessing of describing my attraction."

Nguyen recognizes how fortunate he was to have a positive college experience. "Being out on campus is really comfortable. Being a cis-gendered gay male on campus is easy." He encourages students to engage in a broader community and "learn to be a good ally instead of just being caught up in whatever it is that makes you feel oppressed."

He also recognizes the privilege of attending schools in the Twin Cities that are mostly queer friendly. "It's really easy to become comfortable and relaxed in your safe college environment, and then when you get out, you realize that there's a whole lot of awful things going on, and you need to pay attention and not get too comfortable." He encourages people to get involved in the broader community in order to take advantage of the freedom of being out in the real world.

After graduation, Nguyen will build his art portfolio with the hopes to attend graduate school. Regarding how his work for the GLBT community will affect his future, he notes "It's never in a way that I can put a title on it or add it to a resume, which I think is really fantastic because I want all those issues to become sort of second nature to me so I can incorporate that into my work and different areas of my life without it being its own separate insular thing." □



Photo by Mike Hnida

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choices
inspiring
paths
life



PAULA PEDERSEN AND HELEN MONGAN-RALLIS

UNIVERSITY OF
MINNESOTA, DULUTH

As Professors in the Education and Psychology departments at University of Minnesota, Duluth, Helen Mongan-Rallis and Paula Pedersen are active in GLBT programming on campus as well as including discussion of GLBT issues in their classrooms. While Pederson teaches psychology courses such as Human Sexuality and Gender in Society, Mongan-Rallis incorporates issues of GLBT adolescent development into her education courses in hopes to give future teachers the tools to be allies. One thing that drew Mongan-Rallis to UMD was a clause included in the discrimination policy that protected GLBT people.

Initially not open about her sexuality, Mongan-Rallis submitted an anonymous entry into a public journal that she was a new faculty member who was afraid to come out as a lesbian. "A student appealed to me. She said, 'Please, if you can be out as a lesbian faculty member. It would mean an enormous amount, not just to GLBT students but to all. We desperately need role models and need to know we are not alone.' It had an enormous impact on me. I realized how impor-

tant it was for those of us who were in a position of privilege to be out." Pederson notes that her work with students is a "reminder of how much of a struggle it can be for young people still today in 2012! I can lose sight of that reality and the students help me to realize the privilege I have—as well as my need to at times be more intentional and overt in the queer parts of me for their sake. At times, simply being comfortable and normalized is NOT enough to help them to feel seen and honored. I have countless students who have lived major parts of their journey to sexual identity discovery and congruency in their four years at UMD. Witnessing the blossoming of their identities is powerful (sometimes painful) and an honor."

Mongan-Rallis wants students to know that "I will stand beside them every step of the way." She encourages everyone to live in a way that is as real as possible, and live according to one's own principles—not someone else's image. Mongan-Rallis and her partner raise their daughter in this manner, and ten-year-old Kaitlin has chosen to be open and active in the equal marriage rights movement without any pushing from her mothers.

Pederson offers a message of acceptance and hope for students. "Realize that your classmates come from a variety of different places and experiences around difference. Allow them their journey of discovery and understanding as well. If we can ALL try harder to meet one another with compassion, curiosity and a true willingness to listen, learn and understand – I think that some of the problems that college students face around difference would be able to be managed a bit more easily." □



Angela Nichols, Chancellor Black, Paula Pedersen, Helen Mongan-Rallis.
Photo courtesy of University of Minnesota, Duluth

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JESSICA FLATEQUAL

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

When thinking about GLBT-friendly colleges, many colleges outside of the Twin Cities tend to get overlooked. One college that's impossible to overlook is Minnesota State University in Mankato. MNSU Mankato has the second-oldest GLBT organizations in the nation and was voted by *The Advocate* as one of the top 100 campuses in the nation for GLBT students.

As a long-time resident of Mankato, Jessica Flatequal knows how important it is for the GLBT community to have resources and support in a smaller town. Now the Director of GLBT Services at MNSU Mankato, Flatequal works to educate the campus on GLBT issues and provides support for the GLBT community, encouraging students to "tote their rainbows." Flatequal truly feels that the MNSU community is very supportive. "I feel like my work here is supported by the President of our college, and I feel a lot of support on the campus for the work we do. I don't have to spend a lot of time justifying what we do. People seem to understand our purpose and really be on board with it."

MNSU Mankato offers several unique programs to better service the GLBT community. Flatequal notes, "A lot of the work we do is based on educating the whole campus." A mentor program allows students newly out or questioning students to meet up with currently out students. Flatequal hopes to spread the message that students aren't alone, especially in the college environment. Another group, Being Ethnic And Queer (BEAQ), focuses on the intersectionality of sexuality and race. Not only does Flatequal plan programming for the GLBT community and its allies, but she also runs one program that actually focuses on informing perpetrators of harassment in order to promote tolerance and acceptance.

Flatequal feels fortunate to work in the college environment. "I have the privilege of sometimes finding students in a really dark place, and I get to be a part of their growth and their coming out. For so many students, they become active in our center; they go on to do their own positive activism in their communities wherever they end up. I'm just so proud of their journey that I got to be a part of."

For students who are applying to colleges, Flatequal recommends that they do their homework. "Going off to college is scary enough, and if you have these extra things you're going to have to work through, you might as well go to a place where you know you're going to be supported. It will help your college career greatly, and you need to feel safe where you're at. Find the place that's right for you and all the parts of your identity."

Finally, it's important for people to find the environments they want to be in and shape it to work for them. Flatequal says, "You don't have to be in the big city to feel valued or be who you are." □



Photo courtesy of Jessica Flatequal

THOMAS HAAKENSEN


MINNEAPOLIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

GLBT
support
welcoming
exciting
community
sharing



As the Chair of and full Professor in the Liberal Arts Department at Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD), Thomas Haakenson enriches students' experiences in the classroom by remind students that he is simply human. "Sharing information about my personal life, including my same-sex relationships, is always an important part of humanizing myself to my students. I do not do it aggressively nor immediately, but only gradually. Sharing my sexuality is a personal matter, but I share information about myself in a professional and comfortable way so that my students see me as I try to see them: complex, multi-dimensional, caring, loving beings." Haakenson feels fortunate to work in such a welcoming environment where "the GLBT population is supported by the whole community." For Haakenson, this support comes especially from the personal connections he builds with students. Haakenson notes, "Studies have shown that college students actually learn more if they see their professors as humans, rather than one-dimensional individuals who only exist in a classroom or during an office hour." But what is most exciting, he believes, is that students are creating clubs that "focus on particular forms of cultural expression independent of sexuality, race, or class...these groups allow the institution, its students, and its community to transcend issues of sexual identity in ways that are quite productive, if often indicative of a younger generation who more readily accepts non-heterosexual relationships."

Haakenson advises students to be open with their sexuality despite any fears of losing family or friends. "I have found great friendships and even more supportive family members by opening up to these individuals. They know more about me...and feel I've invested more in them, too."

Finally, for people in the work force, Haakenson notes, "The job market is a tough place right now, so don't think that hiding your sexuality is going to make finding a job easier. It's tough for everyone. But a job isn't the only thing you should be thinking about or living for. Sometimes the best way to make the world a better place is by making small, everyday gestures of kindness. Smile at people more. Be friendly. Say 'thank you' a lot. Hug. Karma has a way of finding you, and thanking you for it." 

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LINNEA STENSON

MINNEAPOLIS COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

As the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and an academic dean at Minneapolis Community & Technical College (MCTC), Linnea Stenson shows her support for the GLBT community by being out and open about her sexuality. With such a huge leadership role at the college, Stenson stresses how important it is to be proud of her identity. "It's important for all of us who are able to do so to be out. I never made any attempt to be anybody other than who I was. I went into my interview my butch self. It was a brave choice for the college to bring me there."

MCTC is a very welcoming community, and Stenson notes that young people really appreciate faculty and staff who are out on campus. Stenson encourages people who feel comfortable being out to be out and advocate for the GLBT community. She says, "I have had young people come up and say thank you for being out there...you never know how just living your life can such an effective and positive thing for young people." She also suggests that GLBT students research prospective schools for GLBT support services and make connections with student groups in order to find support.

For students graduating from college or others who are in the process of finding jobs, Stenson notes "The job market is really rough...but don't be afraid to ask for informational interviews in places where you think you might want to work. You can figure out if organizations have GLBT affinity groups. It can be hard to do the cold call, but I really recommend that people 'screw their courage to the sticking place' and make the calls. Those people, I find, are very generous with their time. They will take the time to talk to someone who's interested in the field or the company."

Finally, Stenson advises people to "remember to breathe, wag your tail as much as you can, be grateful for what you have, and help others where you can." As for her own life, she definitely walks her talk. ■

Photo courtesy of Linnea Stenson



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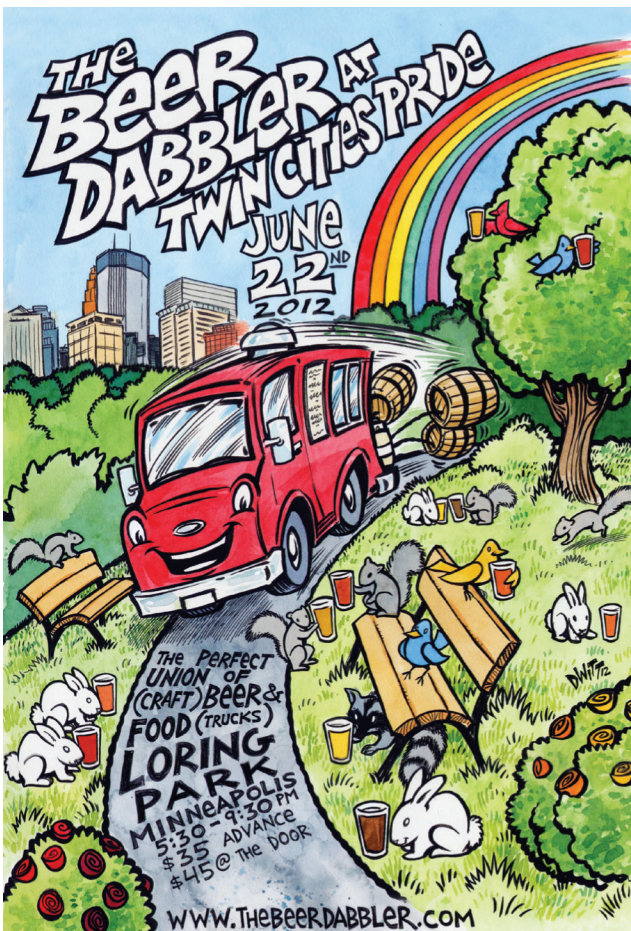
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STRAIGHT-GAY RECONCILERS

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

Nestled away in the suburban area of Arden Hills, Bethel University attracts students for its strong evangelical Christian mission and its seclusion. For firm believers who are straight, the campus is a protective buffer from the outside world, allowing students to focus on their educations and their faiths. But for other students, this buffer does nothing to protect them from the struggle of being GLBT on a less-than-welcoming campus. Though most people assume that GLBT life at Bethel is minimal—why would people attend a college that blatantly doesn't support their lifestyle?—the Straight-Gay Reconcilers (SGR) are making noise and not allowing anyone to stifle who they are.

So how do GLBT students exist on a campus that refuses their identities? Levi Kotas, a transman who left Bethel one semester before he graduated, saw that he could help meet the need for a GLBT community on campus. "In 2005, the Equality Ride came to Bethel...they told me I wasn't alone and instructed that I should go out and try to find more of a community. So I did that the only way I knew how. I wrote a letter to the administration and sent it to every single member of the board of directors, as well as the faculty and staff, and got the attention of everyone immediately. I said that whether they like it or not, there was going to be a Gay Straight Alliance on campus, and due to whatever rights I had as a human being, they couldn't actually stop this group from happening." And happen it did. Though the original group consisted of just Kotas and four of his friends, the group's Facebook page now hosts 128 members, about half of which identify as allies. The site allows the students to plan meetings, share advice and GLBT news, and form a sense of community and belonging. SGR states on its Facebook page that it "seeks to foster a community of love, service, and mutual respect that is intentionally devoted to providing a Safe Place for GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgender) students, as well as providing a Safe Place for open dialogue around the issue of sexuality." Though

SGR exists, Bethel refuses to charter the organization and does not allow them to advertise their group on campus. Junior Mark Edinger, one of the group's current members, notes that SGR events, particularly ones involving discussion about GLBT issues and theology, are not approved by the college. "They don't want us talking about theology or politics that much." Edinger also notes that if events "gain too much of a crowd or get too problematic, they can shut us down."

Edinger was drawn to SGR due to the Safe Place signs they made for professors to hang on their doors to promote a space free of homophobia—a huge statement on campus. For Edinger, "Bethel is a scary place to be out. It's not safe everywhere." The Safe Place program provides support and opportunities for open and safe dialogue about sexuality. But Edinger says that they have to be careful when involving faculty. "We don't want them to get too involved where they could lose their job. We just need support."

With regard to the administration's reaction to SGR, Junior Nadalie Poole, a transwoman, says that the "administration generally is very crafty. They're outright geniuses when it comes to knowing just how much to give us and just how much to take away and block us. The official wording by our Provost is 'welcoming but not accepting.' So they allow us to speak but they don't kill us." Edinger adds, "We're allowed to exist. Students can hold their own opinions, but they still have to follow the covenant. I don't know how they're going to chase us down for that."

In order to attend the college, Bethel students are required to sign a "Covenant for Life Together" which dictates the acceptable Christian behavior they are asked to exhibit. The covenant covers many issues such as alcohol consumption, biblical beliefs, and sexual practices. Included are two statements about homosexuality. First, "The Bible also identifies character qualities and actions that should not be present in the lives of believers. For example: destructive anger, malice, rage, sexual immorality, impurity, adultery, evil desires, greed, idolatry, slander, profanity, lying, homosexual behavior, drunkenness, thievery, and dishonesty [5]." Also, a more general statement about everyone's sexual behavior notes, "We believe that sexual intercourse and other forms of intensely interpersonal sexual



Bethel SGR members Nadalie Poole, Sabrina Fiester, Mark Edinger, Bekah Schneider, and Megan Urness. Photo Courtesy of Sabrina Fiester.

activity are reserved for monogamous, heterosexual marriage. We recognize that sexual purity involves right motives as well as right behaviors."

Straight ally Sabrina Fiester notes that students bring strong values with them to Bethel and sometimes don't know how to react when they experience diversity, particularly regarding gender and sexuality. "A lot of the students grew up in private Christian schools and went to church all the time and believed whatever their parents told them. Then they get here and are like 'Wow, gay people actually exist...it's kind of the first time they're even forced to think about it.'"

The students are very vocal about their opinions of Bethel. Kotas says, "I will openly say that Bethel destroyed my faith. Not necessarily in Christianity, but in Christians. There is zero faith from them anymore." Edinger says, "It's hard to support an organization like Bethel that doesn't support me." But these views don't hinder them from being out and active. Fiester notes that as an ally, she sometimes gets negative responses, but "everyone knows where I stand."

One way SGR raises awareness about GLBT life on campus is through a yearly event called "GLBT at Bethel," where current GLBT students share their experiences with a public audience. This year's event was Provost sponsored, and over 300 people showed up to hear Edinger, Poole, and others tell their stories. Poole's story about her transition touched quite a few audience members, and she notes that lots of people came up to her with positive (and negative) feedback.

When thinking about future Bethel students, straight ally Sheldon Carlsted hopes that students "Come here. We need people in this group so we can break the mold. You're outside of your comfort zone, so you brush up against other people. Make them think in the right direction. It just raises a more tolerant and loving environment." He hopes students come to Bethel to rock the boat. "But I understand why they don't," he adds.

Edinger believes that "If you really want to change the world, start at the places that are most conservative...be brave going in. It may not be the most comfortable place, but you will survive." The SGR is doing more than just surviving; they are mapping uncharted territory at Bethel for the benefit of future GLBT students. □



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BROTHERHOOD AT THE U:

DELTA LAMBDA PHI-DELTA CHAPTER

by Br. Shane M. Nygaard, Delta Lambda Phi Social Fraternity, Delta Chapter

SCHOOL'S OUT

With final exams complete and campus becoming a little quieter than usual, days are getting longer, temperatures are inching their way upward, and all indications point to the fact that, yes, indeed “School’s Out.” Hooray! And although academia has closed many of its doors and is at rest for the summer, many University of Minnesota student groups remain open and active. The Delta Lambda Phi (DLP) Social Fraternity is one such group, and it keeps itself busy year-round. For this “School’s Out” issue of Lavender, let’s take some time out to look at just what DLP is, and how it has become the most successful social fraternity created by gay men, for all men.



Photos by Sophia Hantzes

WHAT EXACTLY IS DLP?

DLP is a social fraternity, identified through various Chapters located on University campuses across the country, and newly expanded internationally into Canada. As a social fraternity based on the Greek college model, each DLP Chapter is given its name in order of the Greek alphabet. As the fourth Chapter of DLP, the University of Minnesota location is the Delta Chapter, founded on September 28, 1988, and had its formal inauguration that same year at the *Y'all Come Back Saloon!*

HISTORY

As a bit of background, the idea for what was to become the Delta Lambda Phi Social Fraternity originated in 1986 with founder Vernon L. Strickland III during the course of discussions at a party in Washington, DC. Attentive to the lack of alternative social organizations for gay men at the time, discussions that night and in the coming weeks revolved around creating a “progressive social fraternity” for men, irrespective of sexual orientation, that would be based on the college Greek model. These discussions eventually led to the founding of Delta Lambda Phi Social

Fraternity. From the beginning, DLP was founded on three purposes, which continue to inform its direction and unite the Brotherhood in common values of social, service and recreational activities, and the rights of and a respect for the diversity of all individuals.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Twice a year—Fall and Spring semesters—the Delta Chapter schedules its Rush period. Rush is a series of events for interested men to attend in the effort of getting to know the Delta Chapter Brothers and for the Brothers to get to know the men interested in possibly joining the fraternity. Rush events are aimed at social interactions and provide plenty of opportunity for questions, learning, and having fun. Events vary from semester to semester, but previous events have included bowling night, Mall of America mini-golf, coffee social, and a drag party. After the Rush period, bids are offered to rush participants who are determined to be the best fit with the fraternity, and once the bids are accepted, the pledge process begins. The Pledge period is a 7-week period of education about the fraternity, interaction with the Brothers, and a series of tasks assigned to the pledges to complete during the pledge process. It is all part of the process every Brother in the fraternity has committed to.



Photos by Sophia Hantzes

PRESENT

In its current form, Delta Lambda Phi has 30 Chapters. The Delta Chapter at the University of Minnesota is active with 20 Brothers and a surrounding community of supportive and engaging alumni. Though identified primarily as a social fraternity with a continuous calendar of social events, DLP Brothers make their presence known in a number of different ways through service to the local community. Service projects include volunteering at the Minnesota AIDS Project, participating in the MN AIDS Walk, and at Pride both by marching in the parade and with a booth setup in the park. These are events when the fraternity gives back to the local community and makes its presence known.

FUTURE

Of course the future of the Delta Chapter is always a work-in-progress and is dependent upon a multitude of variables. But with strong leadership in place and an active and dynamic group of Brothers that has grown consistently over the past two years, the Delta Chapter is thriving. Goals for the future include continuing to increase the Chapter's membership, developing an even stronger presence on the University campus, participating in additional service projects in the Twin Cities, and planning new creative and exciting events for future rush periods.

BROTHERHOOD

All logistics aside, at the heart of DLP and what sets it apart from other organizations is its unique quality of Brotherhood. One could look up the dictionary definition of "brotherhood," gain an intellectual knowledge of it to mean "the state or relationship of being brothers; fellowship; an association of men, such as a fraternity or union, united for common purposes," but the actual Brotherhood experience cannot be so rigidly defined or described. Every DLP Brother has his own sense of and experience of what it means to be a Brother and each brings his own meaning of Brotherhood to the fraternity. When asked what Brotherhood means to him, Delta Chapter Brothers and Alumni describe the meaning of Brotherhood in an array of different ways, covering a full spectrum of experiences anywhere from loyalty, honor, friendship, and community to strength, trust, honesty, and integrity. To others, Brotherhood means strength in numbers, bonding, and teamwork. It means love, friendship, and even family-like *it or not*. It means standing together as a whole even when the pieces don't fit together nicely. Brotherhood is support and unconditional love, along with laughter and acceptance, and ultimately it can be the strongest bond in life. And it is through the bonds of Brotherhood that, although school's out at the U, for Delta Lambda Phi, Brotherhood is always in. ◻

For further information, and to learn of the Fall Semester 2012 rush at the U, please visit www.dlp.org/delta, or find us online at Twitter and Facebook.



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School's Out: Macalester College Faculty, Staff, and Students Take a Stand for Marriage Equality

by Adrienne Christiansen, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Scholarship and Teaching at Macalester College

CALL ME a reluctant gay marriage activist. This spring, two Macalester alums asked me whether Macalester faculty and staff were going to do anything to speak out against the proposed Minnesota constitutional amendment that will ban same-sex marriage. Mmmmm? Good question.

The alums' question troubled me because I genuinely did not want to do anything about the upcoming ballot initiative. I lead a busy life, and most mornings I wake up thinking about ways to improve teaching and learning at Macalester rather than ways to establish the legality of same-sex marriage in our state.

I definitely did not want to coordinate any such efforts on campus. Why not? Because I feared I would be seen as a hypocrite. After all, I am not married to my Beloved – a woman with whom I have been happily partnered for 11 years.

Even worse, my "rainbow credentials" seem tarnished and dusty. I cannot remember the last time I attended the Minnesota Gay Pride Parade. My car no longer sports a rainbow flag and I dislike the word "heteronormativity" almost as much as the concept to which it refers. In short, I am no one's idea of a gay rights activist.

Nevertheless, I could not bear to say to those alums, "No, Macalester faculty probably won't do anything to speak out. We are very busy and are thus likely to remain silent as a group in the face of that odious amendment." So, I dodged their question. "I'll get back to you on this," I said.

My attitude changed once I started reading about the ballot initiative and the proposed constitutional amendment. Where I had previously been lukewarm to same-sex marriage, the idea of blatantly discriminating against same-sex couples, and enshrining that discrimination in the Minnesota constitution, got me fired me up. I began organizing my colleagues, and we got busy.

The gay and lesbian faculty who came together dubbed ourselves "Macalester for



The statement and its many signatures.
Photo courtesy of Adrienne Christiansen

Marriage Equality." We plan to host a series of programs in the fall term that will bring together the proponents and opponents of the constitutional amendment. We intend to sponsor civil dialogue and debate, and we hope to collaborate with student organizations in these efforts. We expect to coordinate get-out-the-vote activities in preparation for the Nov. 6, 2012 election.

We also wanted to make public our deep concerns about the amendment and why we oppose it. After working through many drafts and revisions, we wrote a formal statement of our views and this week began asking folks on campus to sign it. We hope that you, too, will read the statement, research the issue on your own if you have not already done so, and then join us by signing the statement if you share our perspective. You can find the full text and directions on how to e-sign the statement at <http://bit.ly/mnmarriagerights>

I may be a reluctant same-sex marriage activist, but I hope I have made those two alums proud of their alma mater. Busy as we are, Macalester faculty and staff won't take discrimination against gay and lesbian Minnesotans sitting down. I urge you to examine your conscience and, if you can, stand with us for marriage equality.

Why We Oppose the Proposed Constitutional Amendment

1. The proposed constitutional amendment solely limits the rights of same-sex

couples. Discrimination in civil rights on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is wrong. We believe such limitations on civil rights should not be enshrined in our state constitution.

2. The proposed constitutional amendment conflicts with Macalester's community standards as exemplified by the Equal Employment Statement and Affirmative Action Policy Statement (Section 3.1 Employees' Handbook). These policies forbid any Macalester employee from discriminating against other Macalester employees or students on the basis of "marital status" or "sexual orientation."

3. Our opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment comports with Macalester College's historic commitment to social justice and its efforts to create learning and working environments that do not infringe upon human rights.

4. Passage of the proposed constitutional amendment could substantially impair Macalester's ability to recruit and retain the best-qualified students, staff, faculty and administrators. Those who weigh a choice to attend Macalester or accept its offers of employment may well consider its location in Minnesota negatively.

5. We believe the arguments on both sides of the same-sex marriage debate ought to be weighed in judicial proceedings where legal precedent and constitutional standards can be considered, but the proposed constitutional amendment would limit such considerations. According to those individuals promoting the ballot initiative, they pursue a constitutional amendment in order to preempt civil rights-based legal challenges to current Minnesota law (such as the 1997 Minnesota "Defense of Marriage Act.") In contrast, we believe that the advocates of same-sex marriage ought to be able to make future legal arguments grounded in the equal protection and freedom of conscience clauses of the Minnesota constitution. □

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**1-USA****Gays May Have the Fastest Civil Rights Movement**

United States – The Los Angeles Times reports that attitudes toward gays and lesbians have changed so much in the last decade that, as a poll reported, “half or more now agree that being gay is morally acceptable, that gay relations ought to be legal, and that gay or lesbian couples should have the right to legally marry.” Cleve Jones, a protege of San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk in the 1970s, said “It’s pretty extraordinary what we’ve accomplished in less than 50 years.”

Apology Undermines Focus on the Family’s Views

Colorado – DenverWestword.com reports that groups like Focus on the Family can no longer use junk science such as “gay cure” to justify their anti-gay views. Dr. Robert Spitzer, author of a controversial 2001 study arguing that gayness could be reversed, rejected his own research and subsequently apologized to the gay community. Perhaps his action can lead Colorado Springs-based Focus on the Family to back away from the philosophy behind reparative therapy.

How to Know Whether You’re Bisexual?

United States – The Stir reports that while you’re exploring your sexuality, it helps to think of it all on a spectrum. On one end, you have gay, and on the other, straight. But what if you find yourself attracted to both men and women? Many theories suggest we are all a little bisexual. Here are some clues:

- You have more than a crush on people of the same sex; your feelings are deeper than a “bromance” or a “girl crush.”
- You have fantasies about people who are the same sex and about others who are a different gender.
- You feel it in your gut.
- You look for qualities in a person, rather than specific people, to date.

Republicans Now Quietly Embracing Gays?

United States – The Miami Herald reports that a quiet transformation is occurring in the Republican Party. It has begun to embrace openly gay candidates and gay Republicans, who feel more comfortable speaking

out in a party that may have accepted them but didn’t always show it. Former Republican Rep. Jim Kolbe said “It’s an exponential change from a few years ago, and it’s going to continue to happen.” Currently, only four members of Congress are openly gay, all Democrats. But that could change in November.

2-ZIMBABWE**“We Don’t Do Gays Here” -Chinamasa**

Zimbabwe – The Zimbabwe Mail reports that Zimbabwe’s justice minister, Patrick Chinamasa, said the country will continue to persecute people who engage in same-sex relations. United Nations Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay recently visited the country to meet with relevant ministerial officials and civic society organizations in her assessment of the state of human rights situation in Zimbabwe. President Robert Mugabe declared in November that gays will be punished for their behavior in accordance with “African and Christian values.”

3-ISRAEL**Israeli Report Recommends Surrogate Mothers for Gays**

Israel – JTA reports that an Israeli Health Ministry committee has recommended that gay men be allowed to seek a surrogate mother to have a child.

4-ARGENTINA**Argentina Grants Gender Self-Determination**

Argentina – Bitch Magazine reports that Argentina marked the end of gender by giving its citizens the freedom to change their legal and physical gender without having to undergo any kind of medical treatment or judicial procedures. The law gives Argentinians the unique freedom of gender self-determination. In America, swapping gender on a birth certificate typically requires evidence of hormone therapy, sex reassignment procedure, and/or a psychological assessment.

5-IRAN**Iranian Gay Men To Be Hanged For Sodomy**

Iran – Huffington Post reports that four Iranian gay men are due to be executed for sodomy under their nation’s Shari’a laws. Last month, The Guardian reported that influential cleric and an Islamic scholar Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi-Amoli referred to gays as inferior to dogs and pigs. Javadi-Amoli said “If a society commits a new sin, it will face a new punishment. Problems like AIDS did not exist before.”



... See expanded issue online and via iPad and iPhone app. ...



Brian Cihacek

The DLF Party's Veteran's Caucus has made a point of standing strong against the amendment that would ban the freedom to marry in Minnesota. Minnesota Army National Guard Specialist Brian Cihacek chairs the caucus and is leading their effort against this amendment. He talks with us about why and what motivates him and the group to defeat the amendment.

Lavender Magazine: You are the chair of the DFL Veterans Caucus, which has made defeating this amendment one of its top priorities, as well as a straight ally. Some people may not see the connection between veterans' issues and equality issues. Can you explain why you as a straight veteran feel so passionately about defeating this amendment?

BC: I think a key value at stake in this fight is freedom. Freedom can mean free-

dom from something and, in this case, I think the freedoms of the minority stand threatened by majority.

As a veteran, I believe we must affirm informed have policy which represents the hopes and aspirations of citizens rather than parties or ideologues, and because the this constitutional amendment does not reflect that sentiment, it ought to be defeated.

LM: Have you served with any gay servicemen or women? What kind of conversations have you had about how not having the freedom to marry affects them?

BC: I have served with gay servicemen and women. Because most of my service occurred under Don't Ask Don't Tell, this topic was not widely discussed for fear of stigma. This lack of an atmosphere where dialogue can occur is the sort of environment we can change through defeating this amendment

and not making it just a gay issue, but an issue about our preserving civil rights.

LM: What kind of benefits would be denied the partner of a gay service member that are currently available to straight married couples?

BC: Some of the benefits are the capacity for shared housing, spousal relocation, and a dependent modifier to certain pay benefits. Not to mention the numerous benefits given to surviving spouses in the event something happens in the field.

LM: If you could put in one word what value defeating the amendment embodies, what would it be?

BC: Freedom. □

Brian is a part of the Veterans United for All Families coalition. If you are interested in being a part of it, please contact Trevor@mnunited.org.

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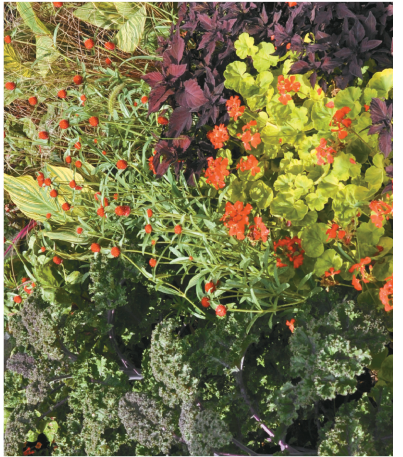
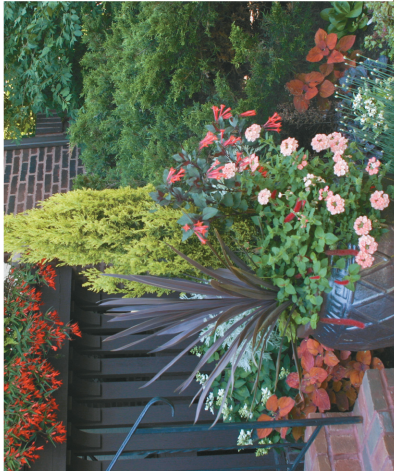
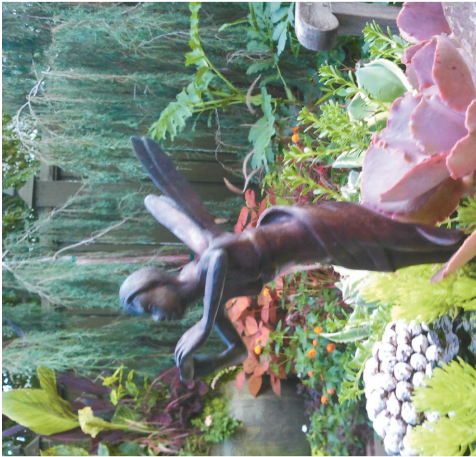
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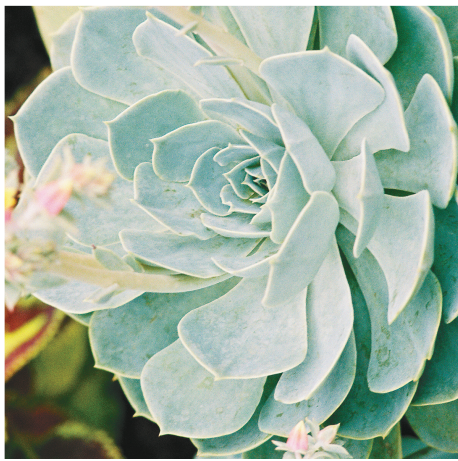
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GARDENING | Scott Endres





Photos courtesy of Scott Endres

EYE CANDY

LEAVE IT to Spring to bring an overwhelming amount of visual inspiration for both gardeners and non-gardeners alike. Our garden center is filled to the max to the garden lovers' delight. Seems like wherever you turn there is eye candy to be fawned over and admired. I must admit, being surrounded by beauty every day is a major job perk for me, and it is equally rewarding to inspire others with the wonders of the plant and garden world. As a visual person, it often takes just a bit of visual inspiration to spark a new idea or captivating combination. Next thing you know, one great combination will lead to another, then to another, and another-- all sparked by the visual

spark that started it all. With that said, be inspired by this visual gallery of captivating combinations or simply stop in for a visit. Happy gardening! □

Scott Endres is co-owner of Tangletown Gardens and the Wise Acre Eatery on 54th and Nicollet in South Minneapolis.



[See more photos online](#)



Photos by Randy Stern

THE LATITUDE TESTER ADDS BIG 17-INCH ALLOY RIMS, MAKING THE PATRIOT MORE AGGRESSIVE WHETHER IT HAS 4WD OR NOT.

[JEEP PATRIOT]

WE THINK we know what this brand is all about. We certainly know where it came from and how it garners a high level of loyalty from its owners—especially those who fully utilize the capabilities of their steeds.

Part of that loyalty comes from a bit of a spur in history—our history. In Randy Shilts' *The Mayor of Castro Street*, the biography of the late San Francisco politico Harvey Milk, a section of the book painted a picture of the Castro as the center of all GLBT liberation. In one paragraph, Shilts described how newly arrived denizens of the Castro took the neighborhood by storm—in a flotilla of Jeeps.

Sure, I'm embellishing the story a tad, but it was true. In the 1970s, to be gay or lesbian in San Francisco was to embody an air of some level of masculinity. Only a few


vehicles met this image perfectly at that time—namely the Jeep CJ-5. On a sunny day, the top and the doors were removed, and the sounds of disco music wafted out of the stereo onto the streets of the Castro. When you owned a Jeep CJ-5, you *owned* the Castro... or, at least you felt that way for the moment.

In case our memory banks have not served us well, the CJ-5 begat the CJ-7... which begat the Wrangler. Meanwhile, Willys-Overland, one of the two originators of the World War II-winning instrument of military flexibility and the post-war keeper of the grail, sold Jeep to the Kaiser Corporation in 1954, then to American Motors in 1970, and has been part of Chrysler's portfolio since 1987. For something that won a major World War, it has gone through a series of metamorphoses

without diluting its core task—to drive anywhere without fail. This is where Jeep won its followers since the end of World War II.

From the 1970s, our community's loyalty to the Jeep brand runs as deep as everyone else's. Who do you know in your circle of friends and family owns a Jeep? It doesn't have to be a Wrangler, *per se*, but you can see every kind of Jeep built amongst our people.

Though some Jeeps are more equal than others, the Patriot may seem less so. Combined on the same platform as the Compass and the now-extinct Dodge Caliber, the Patriot was seen as a small Jeep with some Trail Rated credibility. A measure of a Jeep is whether it earns the Trail Rated badge—an indicator to the consumer that it can go off the tarmac and into wherever you want it to go.



After several years in the market, the Patriot remains in the lineup despite being scheduled for replacement by the combined powers-to-be between Fiat and Chrysler based on the Five-Year plan of 2009. While it is still with us, the Patriot provides a quandary for Jeep aficionados and small SUV/crossover consumers as to whether this is Jeep enough for everyone—including the brand's loyal consumers.

The Patriot starts with a familiar look. From the front, it could be a *doppelgänger* for the Wrangler—the seven-slot grille and prominent round headlights. Out in the back, the Patriot melds another Jeep icon onto its small frame—the 1984 Cherokee. By putting these two icons together, the Patriot becomes a visual representation honoring the brand's past with a current mission in mind. Just like the old Cherokee, the roof height is lower compared to current small crossover/SUV offerings. A few nips and tucks were executed from the original a year or so ago, which makes the Patriot a bit more attractive than before.

The Latitude tester adds big 17-inch alloy rims, making the Patriot more aggressive whether it has 4WD or not. Firestone Affinity tires are not exactly made for rock-hopping, but they do form a sense of civility to the Patriot. The Latitude adds fog lamps up front and some subtle aerodynamics for better protection and airflow underneath.

One peek inside, and you get what the Patriot is all about. In the Latitude model, it's all business. You get a no-nonsense cabin for four adults and enough space in the cargo hold for a week at the cabin. Everything is straightforward from the instrumentation to the switches. To top it all off is the brand's big steering wheel with plenty of functions available at your fingertips. Remember, the audio switches are on the back of the steering wheel—a unique Chrysler feature.

Up front, the seats are comfortable and supportive with plenty of bolstering to keep you in place through the curves or the rough stuff. If you find a nice upright position, you can command your Patriot without compromising your body. Rear seat passengers are treated to deep foot wells with plenty of space underneath the front seats. Seatbacks recline for second-row passengers. Though there is plenty of headroom, legroom may depend on the size of the adult sitting in back. Since there are cup holders in the middle of the rear floor, a third rear seat passenger may be out of the question for long journeys.

This Latitude tester did not come with a whole host of luxuries, such as a navigation

system, a sunroof, or other extras we love to play with. Instead, Chrysler's standard audio set-up is more than adequate for the journey ahead. Along with AM, FM, and Sirius satellite radio, a single CD player is one option to enjoy your favorite sound through the Patriot's four speakers. Your MP3 player gets an auxiliary jack in case you have some tunes you want to bring along for the trip. UConnect bridges your Bluetooth-enabled phone, becoming another piece of the audio suite that includes both phone and streaming audio from your music files. Simply, everything works together very well.

If you think that the cargo space in the Patriot is simply adequate, try folding down the second row. You can still carry plenty of things totaling 54.2 cubic feet of usable space. Once you fold down the front passenger seatback, there is a total of 62.7 cubic feet to play with for skis or that tall lamp you found at the thrift store.

Powering this small SUV is a 2.4-litre dual overhead camshaft four-cylinder engine. This capable motor comes with the requisite four-valves per cylinder and variable valve timing as you get with all modern engines these days—good for 172 horsepower. That's plenty of power when you only have less than 3,400 pounds to play with. The lighter weight and the willing engine make a fine combination when it is in motion, gobbling up the miles. The engine can get a bit noisy at lower ratios when the throttle is pressed. Once it settles into the groove, it is a very quiet SUV.

A continuously variable transmission sends power to Jeep's standard four-wheel drive set-up. There were a few issues with the CVT, such as moments of slow response to the throttle when entering onto the highway and while cruising when the CVT selects a ratio powering the engine at a higher RPM than normal. However, there is a solution to this problem—the Autostick. If you toggle the gear lever from side-to-side, the CVT responds with the correct ratio at the right speed. Sounds like a manual gearbox to me...

Being a quiet little Jeep has its advantages. Ride quality is solid on all surfaces; not a lot of crossovers and SUVs can say that. Whether it is a smooth piece of tarmac, a street full of potholes, or a gravel rural road, the Patriot soaks it all in without complaint. Even on gravel, the Patriot is still a quiet rider.

One surprise that was welcomed was the steering action from such a big wheel. The response is sharp and exacting, though a slightly smaller steering wheel would help matters a tad. Brakes are quite decent as the

action is a bit sharper than most crossovers and SUVs driven lately.

On-road handling is quite soft, however. There is plenty of lean and roll in the corners but with very little noise and feedback on the curves. Granted, no one buys a Jeep to carve up canyon roads, but there is plenty of solidity in the way the Patriot drives to make up for these few complaints.

For a small crossover/SUV to warrant the attention of gas pump price-conscious consumers, fuel economy has to be within reasonable limits. The Patriot achieved a fuel consumption figure of 20.2MPG. You can get better fuel economy in a Patriot as the EPA rates it at 21-26MPG.

Another important piece of the puzzle in this market place is the price one pays for such capability—especially in a Jeep. For this Latitude tester, the sticker came to only \$24,685. You get plenty of conveniences for the money, but what if you wanted a Patriot with off-roading skills and an in-dash Garmin navigation? You can get the Freedom Drive II package with off-road capabilities on the Latitude for almost \$600-700 more, but not with the navigation. To get everything you want for outright adventure, you have to upgrade to the Patriot Limited. With the Freedom Drive II package and navigation on the Limited starting at \$26,445, you may end up with the bargain of the class.

The Patriot offers plenty of value with the right look and ambition. It is also quite the small SUV with a lot to offer, when equipped properly. Of course, it's not perfect. No vehicle can be exactly what you want, but it is a good choice for those of us on a budget looking to get into the ground level of Jeep.

Is this the right Jeep for us? Good question. As GLBT people, we are loyal to the brands that support us and our lifestyle over the years. We expect them to deliver the goods for us when something new comes out. Therefore, we expect a lot from Jeep. These tough Trail Rated, yet civilized, machines are a huge part of our heritage.

The Patriot is right for some of the places we might live in. The price point is very good for most of our wallets. It carries up to four of us at a time. And, there are quite a number of us who already own this small wonder. Sounds like a good choice, doesn't it?

It is a Jeep, after all.

Randy Stern is an automotive writer from Robbinsdale, Minnesota. He can be followed at *Victory & Reseda* - <http://www.randystern.net>.



Thap

I'VE BEEN best friends with a guy named Tharp for more than forty years. Decades ago, I began calling him "Thap," and it stuck. We met in Cedar Rapids on the first day of eighth grade when Thap walked up the aisle of our loud yellow bus. He had a fresh crew cut of jet black hair and wore brand-new blue jeans topped by a white button-down shirt. I saw a smile and an offered hand.

"Hi, I'm Dennis."

In retrospect, it's a wonder he was so friendly; with shaggy hair nearly to my shoulders, striped multicolored bell bottoms and a Nehru jacket, I was my own special mix of Iowa hippy and weirdo. A ten-inch silver medallion hung around my neck—Mom thought it made me look cool. I smiled at this new kid, flashed the peace sign, and replied, "Peace man."

It was 1970, after all.

Somehow, some way, we clicked. Soon, we were nightly telephone junkies, sharing about girls, music and politics. Eventually, we both made the football team, with Thap as quarterback and me as front-line guard—making sure that he was safe from rushing linemen hellbent on taking him down.

Later—much later—I told him my secrets. That I loved all things feminine. That I fantasized about sex with women *and* men. That something wasn't right with me. He listened as I confessed, held me when I wept, and was there for me as my marriage crumbled. All the while, he never asked, "Are you crazy?"

When I shifted from man to woman, he

didn't waver. I took a road trip to visit surgeons for gender reassignment surgery. "I'll come with you," Thap offered. And thus, we began a three thousand mile odyssey where I found myself listening as Thap interrogated sex change doctors. "So, what is your post-surgical rate for orgasms?" he asked. "What kind of follow up will you do after Ellie's surgery?" At one point, I had to pull him back—I worried that his questioning was too aggressive.

"Ease up or this doctor won't want me to be his patient."

In the end, Thap's opinion was crucial as to whom I'd choose for my surgeon. I couldn't have made that decision without his good counsel.

Six months after I transitioned, now looking all female, I met Thap at the airport. I decided to play a trick on him. Sitting near the baggage claim, I acted disinterested. From the corner of my eye, I watched Thap walk past me. Ten seconds later, my cell phone buzzed. "Where r u?" the text read.

"Ten ft away," I texted back.

I looked up and grinned. Thap smiled back, proof that my transition was a success.

For years, we've been telephone confidants, speaking four or five or six times a week—him in Boulder and me, now, in Minneapolis. His twenty-year-old daughter regularly calls for my advice: "Hi, Aunt Ellen." My youngest daughter adores Thap. We've holidayed together and most recently, I spent Christmas—and shed tears—with him at a Phoenix hospice as his father headed to-

ward death.

It is, in many ways, the most fulfilling—platonic—love affair one could ever want.

Two months ago, it was my turn to accompany Thap on a medical journey. This time, it was his heart—that wonderful body part that permitted Thap to love me for four decades.

We showed up at the Mayo clinic at 5:30 on a Friday morning, anxious. The night before, being the ever good lawyer and designee on his medical power of attorney, I clarified Thap's final wishes. "If things go wrong," he offered, "I don't want a life where I'm bedridden."

I promised.

As I watched two nurses wheel Thap away, I sank. The procedure had a tremendously good success rate, but still, you never know. For a second, I imagined my life without him and saw only blackness.

Six hours later, I sat with a groggy and hurting Thap in his hospital room. "Things went remarkably well," the nurse exclaimed. I breathed easier.

I took advantage of the leftover anesthesia and teased about him being both bossy and cranky. Then I waited on him hand and foot, and I stayed until it was night.

I drove to the hotel that evening, thankful. With luck, we'll have another twenty five years together.

On the other hand, even that many years won't be enough. □

Ellen Krug can be reached at ellenkrug75@gmail.com.

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OUR VOICES



DATELAND | Jennifer Parelo

I'm Going To Tell Your Mother

I MAY have mentioned in previous columns that my handyman regularly texts me naked pictures of the tramps he picks up at donut shops and mini-marts. But, it's spring and everyone is feeling frisky, so this fun fact bears repeating.

I have begged him to stop sending me these pictures. He knows I'm a lesbian and, not surprisingly, is titillated by it. He thinks it's so cool that he can both ogle my breasts (which are quite ogle-able) and treat me like a bro.

Last week, while I was at a business meeting, I made the mistake of leaving my phone on the table when I left the conference room for a moment. When I returned, I found seven guys in suits giggling uncontrollably while passing my phone around the room. I ripped the phone from one of the executive's paws, only to find that my idiot handyman had texted me a picture of a girl's hoo-hah. It popped up on the iPhone screen when I left the room.

I excused myself from the meeting and called the imbecile.

"You have to stop doing this," I said, in my best angry whisper.

He giggled, thus proving that blue collar and white-collar guys DO have something in common. They all giggle like schoolgirls every time they see a naked woman.

I gazed down at the picture. It was as sad and desperate as every picture he sends me. The girls are always too young for him. He's 42, and they look like fetuses. They have the same hairless, googly-eyed appearance as a fetus and seem to be encased in a jelly-like substance. The pictures are usually taken in their bedrooms, which are typically adorned with soiled pink comforters and black sheets. There is always a picture of a butterfly or a panda or some other victimized breed of animal hanging on the wall. And the picture is al-

ways crooked. They usually have scars on their abdomens. I prefer to think they're the result of botched appendectomies, but I fear they are the marks of something far more sinister.

"How do you keep meeting women who feel compelled to send you naked pictures?" I asked.

"They want to keep me interested, I guess," he said proudly.

"And this keeps you interested? A picture of some po-faced hillbilly who looks like she just jumped a freight car out of the holler?" I responded, studying the image. "She has no breasts and appears to have the beginning of scoliosis. She's as sexy as a virus, which I'm certain she's teeming with."

My handyman is a good-looking guy with a well-paying job (garbage truck driver), which makes him a great catch in my small town. He has a new love interest every weekend, which he announces by sending me a naked snap. Each time I receive one, I ask him to give me the poor girl's mother's phone number so I can tell on her.

I have never taken a naked picture of myself and not just because I'm a prude, which, admittedly, I am. The truth is that I'm very vain, and naked pictures taken by non-professionals are awful. They show every misplaced hair and blemish. And if you are taking a self portrait by holding your camera-phone at arm's length, you have to contort yourself in such a way that pockets of fat balloon in odd places, making you look misshapen. There is a good reason why people dim the lights during sex.

So, kids, stop sending naked pictures to prospective lovers. The next time you're tempted to do so, just remember that the awful person you're texting them to will most likely send them to someone like me. And I will call your mother and let her know what you've been up to. □

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**Dear Ms. Behavior:**

I've been dating Angela for a couple of months. She's smart, attractive and extremely fun – which is not necessarily typical of the garden-variety lesbians I've encountered. I've been okay with her seeing other people, until she recently told me she was seeing a 28-year-old who was also seeing another 28-year-old. Initially, Angela said that the 12-year age difference (she's 40) is too much for a serious relationship, but now she seems entranced with having this young woman all to herself. I've found myself to be the jealously bait in this whole thing, i.e., "if you're seeing your little 28 year old girlfriend this weekend, then I'm seeing Stella."

So, my question is: Should I wait this out? I have a feeling that once Angela's obtained her Class of '2002 obsession she'll have won and it won't last and I can go back to weaving my woman-catching web of charm and mystery. On the downside, she drives a HUGE SUV, and while it's great to make out in – I'm a little put off by the sheer mass of her vehicle.

-STELLA

Dear Stella:

If you want an exciting chase and maybe some hot sexual intrigue, fine. But if you're plotting to wait it out with the hope of having a serious relationship with Angela, forget it. Since Angela apparently thinks of you as bait (and worse, always-available bait), her perception probably won't change even

if she and Lolita break it off. It's also a bad sign that Angela has let you know how much she likes the other woman; if she were truly interested in you, she'd probably hedge her bets and keep it to herself.

But you're right about the huge SUV. Lesbians who drive massive vehicles tend to be hyper-athletic and bossy—not necessarily good girlfriend material, unless you're into that sort of thing. But a friend with a big truck is a beautiful thing. Let Angela rescue you from snow banks and take you on off-road trips to the sand dunes and mountains. If you quit making out in the truck, Angela can use it to help you haul your furniture and lingerie once you capture a girlfriend who actually adores you.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I appreciate your column and read it religiously. My question pertains to the inequality within our community. By that I mean that as lesbians, it seems that we are not treated equally by our brothers. To keep this short I'll share only one example: Whenever I go out to a gay/lesbian bar and the bartender is male, I never get fair service. If a man walks up to the bar after me, he always gets faster, more attentive service. It appears that the bartender is strained to even look at me, let alone ask me what I'd like to drink.

It is a catch-22 situation. Women/lesbians are accused of poor tipping, yet we frequently receive rotten service. So, why tip that kind of service? Plus, if we are as-

sertive and say something, then of course we are labeled "bitchy" and the cycle continues. How do you suggest handling this inequality within our own community?

-RISKY

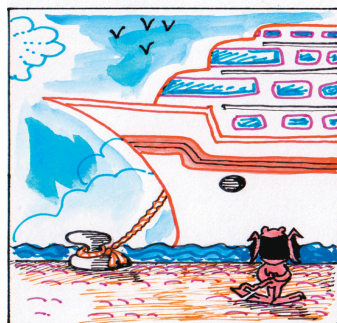
Dear Risky:

Ms. Behavior will start with the assumption that you're not the kind of lesbian who sits at the bar with nine friends who drink a total of 36 beers, eat 45 meatball heroes, split the bill to the penny based on who got the most meatballs, and then tips two bucks. She'll also assume that the bartender is not a shallow, crotch-gazing party boy.

With those as givens, if you're reasonable customers, you should get decent service. If you don't, poor tipping with no comment is not the solution; it only perpetuates the perception that lesbians are cheap. (It's also an excuse for lesbians who really ARE cheap to feel justified about their bad manners, and for gay men who dislike women to feel that the bad service was warranted.) So, if the bartender snubs you, say something direct, but stick to the situation at hand, describing why you're displeased.

But please do not try to educate the bartender about the entire cultural, political, and socioeconomic structure that perpetuates the oppression of your sisters. Don't, for example, remind him that lesbians only get 49 cents for every dollar a man earns. He doesn't care. And if you annoy him, he may not wash your glass properly. □

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The Body Shop

THE GIRL on the elliptical next to you is impossibly thin. You roll your eyes and peek at the dashboard on her machine. Time Elapsed: 85 minutes. Resistance Level: 10. Cross Ramp Level: 10. Holy shit. Who is this girl? She's even pedaling on her tiptoes.

You sneak admiring, jealous glances at her stats until she wraps up her work out (five minutes later, thankfully), and YOU become Master of the Elliptical.

Your reign lasts 15 minutes on Level 1, when you dismount the elliptical and make your way to the free weight section, which you let empty out before you walked over. It's been several weeks—(cough) months—since you've been here. You decide to start easy, and you pick up a 10lb dumbbell. With one hand on your waist for balance, you curl the weight with your other.

You smile at yourself in the mirror. I AM HERE. This summer will be amazing. This is the beginning of many such work outs. Look at how easily I curl this weight, this insignificant piece of metal.

Your confidence is high. Your endorphins are pumping. And then—POP!—you feel a snap in your forearm. You drop the weight on the matted floor and stretch your arm to pop it.

"Dude, you aight?" says a new arrival to the free weights. He's definitely not your junior. Well, maybe in age. But in gym experience, no. He's like The David or something.

"Yeah," you say and stretch your arms. "Just dusting off the cobwebs."

He laughs, "Well lemme know if you want any help." He walks to a bench press.

Why yes, you think to yourself, I would like your help. Just not with any of this. You smile and pick up your 10lb dumbbell. And you feel a kind of sadness fall over you. Something between embarrassment and want.

You've felt this way before. At pool parties. When your friends with the big muscles group together for a picture and you feel awkward because either they didn't invite you to stand with them or because even if they did, you'd decline with a funny/defensive remark like, "I ain't standing next to you muscle-heads."

It's you being self-conscious. It's you being too busy to work out as much as they do, although you secretly wish you were more like them (which really translates into you lacking the motivation). It's you being vain. It's you wanting to feel attractive.

This is us being who we are—social creatures with sex drives and a natural desire to feel wanted. We want to feel as lusted after as we perceive our gorgeous friends to be. It's a feeling that started at puberty and, though its importance to us may dull with time, it remains an indelible part of who we are. We want to be beautiful. When we look at our naked selves in the mirror, rarely do we find

solace in "I look average."

But then that word "confidence" rears its nasty little head. "Confidence is sexy," you've heard. And you know it's true. It's why there are so many "how in the world did THEY end up together?" observations (barring money, of course, but that's another column).

The bottom line is confidence IS sexy. You know it is. It charms people. It wins them over. So why is it so hard to pretend like we have it when it comes to our bodies?

It's hard to pretend because you can't fake it. False confidence is cockiness—and it reeks of insecurity.

I have a slender build—little muscle mass—and when I do work out, I enjoy long periods on the elliptical with the New Yorker, not weights. Meanwhile, I'm surrounded by friends who tend to their pecs, abs, and legs religiously. But I'm not ashamed of my paltry biceps in the summertime. Why? Because I stopped putting physical confidence on a pedestal above social know-how (you know, like how to carry on a conversation). What makes me confident with my clothes on is that same thing that gives me confidence when I take them off—a distinction, I think, worth considering the next time you feel a little uncomfortable.

At least until you have that ass made of steel. ▣

...Listen to the audio recording by the author on the iPad. ...





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A black and white photograph of two men in suits. The man in the foreground is smiling and holding a glass of vodka with ice. The man in the background is also smiling and holding a glass. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

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